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# THE FENIANS:

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—OR,—

## NEIL O'CONNOR'S TRIUMPH.

CHAPTER I.

THE MAID OF MALLAKY.

**A Story of Old Ireland and Young America.**

BY J. W. McCARTNEY.

BOSTON:

ELLIOTT, THOMES & TALBOT,

63 CONGRESS STREET.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE MAID OF KILLARNEY.

THE blush on Kathie O'Connor's cheek, as revealed by the light of the evening fire, was too deep to be the index to a calm spirit and a happy heart. Taken along with the resolute though half-appealing expression of her large blue eyes fixed in reverie, there was enough to suggest some secret trouble and indignation—to convince the careful observer that the gifts of home and friends and a beauty so rare it had won for the maiden the appellation of Bloom of Killarney, had not altogether sufficed to protect her against the vicissitudes common to our race.

Sitting thus, her rosy finger-tips deeply indenting the crimson cheek, over against her, likewise flooded by the clear hearth-blaze, sat her brother Neil; while between the two, but a little suspiciously withdrawn from their circle, was seated Bryson O'Connor, the father, a copy of the *Belfast Journal* clenched in his hands and held before his face,—though whether he was perusing the sheet, or merely using it as a screen from the fire whose cheerful radiance seemed to mock the mood of the cotter household, cannot be said. At all events, his eyes could not be seen to have moved from the same line within half an hour; and so motionless and rigid was his whole aspect, he would have formed the perfection in a *tableau vivant* of one of a ship's crew long ago frozen to death in the ice-bound latitudes of the North.

At the feet of Neil O'Connor crouched a couple of dogs, not belonging to any of the common breeds; these their young master alternately incited to belligerence with each other, and with a few low-spoken words soothed and shamed into fawning upon himself in most humble abjectness. While apparently thus employed, the handsome and intelligent, though somewhat erratic, hotspur youth, through constant glances of a pair of sharp, laughing eyes, kept open, unconsciously to her, a line of communication with his sister, by which he acquainted himself more fully with her thoughts and feelings than a person of duller perceptions could have done in unrestrained conversation of hours' length.

By-and-by the elder O'Connor rose stiffly as an automaton, folded his newspaper like the same mechanical apparatus, and still without the least recognition of the presence of his children, went out of the house. The shutting of the door with that sharp clicking of the latch and dull, jarring echo throughout the cottage, just roused Kathie so much that she turned her head, leaning the other over-flushed cheek upon the dimpling fingers of the other plump little hand. At the moment Neil seized with a jerk the pendant ears of one of the dogs, flapping with them the nose of the other, stubby and blunt as a battering-ram, and the animals renewed their snapping and growling.

"Arrah," he then exclaimed, "take the likes o' yer ill-lookin' white teeth inside the jaws o' ye now, or it's meself will flog ye both. For shame, Eric! What'd ye be after doin', Rookh? If ye'll dare say it's lack o' mate sets ye threatnin' to devour each yer brither, we'll go bleed a stag by moonlight in his lordship's park—there, be aisy!—aisy, I say! Aren't we three as fair united Irishmen as any of '97, sure? Hearts of steel we are, but paceable for the prisent as underground mice. We know how, when the time comes, to slip Ireland out o' the hands of her inemies, as an egg is sucked out o' the shell—och, isn't it the truth I'm spakin', me hearties? O, ay now, try the length o' yer red tongues on me face, if ye mean yes intirely."

During the last part of this speech the master had drawn himself up and stretched back in his chair, while the shorter of the two dogs had sprung upon his knee and the taller reared with fore paws placed on his shoulder, and both were most vigorously demonstrating their affection by licking his

cheeks inside and out, his forehead, eyes, neck and ears seemingly bent on out-doing each other.

When this scene had lasted long enough for the satisfaction of Neil O'Connor, a word from him sent his servile friends down, one on either side of him, where they lay prone along the ground, their heads meeting beneath his chair. Then at last he looked straight into his sister's face, without any further attempt at stealing her thoughts unawares; yet still, as throughout, his expression of countenance was little changed from its habitual jollity and careless precipitancy.

"Kathie!"

Kathie did not stir, nor even turn her eyes on her brother, but answered:

"What's it, Neil?"

"Did ye come back to-night over the downs?"

"Did I?—and the path for half the way overshoe with water by the late rains."

"You came over the hill?"

"Where else, of course."

"Was Glyn Brodrick in yer company?"

"Indeed, it's yourself may answer that question, Neil. When you've a decenter tongue, 'twill be time enough for me."

"Arrah now, don't be angry with me for spakin' that name, Kathie. It's plain ye're in love with Glyn, as the boy himself is in love with my sister, or ye'd niver be makin' a show o' temper for a poor raison like that. Sure, it's Glyn Brodrick has seen you home within the week, and will again."

"Not in broad day has he, or any one besides."

"Ah then, how should I know ye was back before dusk at all? But what's the use o' yer seemin' displazed, when I see the bashfulness in yer eye, and yer lips lookin' like swate wine. By Saint Peter, though, Glyn Brodrick's was not the name it mattered with me to spake about to-night."

"No, but his sister Rose's. Rose is well, and as handsome as at church last Sunday—if ye remember where yer eyes were lookin' all the time o' service. But Neil,"—seriously—"Rose is a sober, right-minded girl, who'd sooner put out her own eyes than marry with one of your wild courses."

"Wild courses is it! Be aisy now! Isn't it I that has turned square about, and the praist is not the pattern of a boy as I am myself."

Kathie shook her head.

"Indeed then," confessed her brother in an altered tone, "it may be as you say in all else, but I'll be the likes o' one to stand between you and harm, Kathie, while I've breath in my body or a finger to my hand. Hear that now."

Tears sprang to the eyes of Kathie O'Connor. She knew that, be his failings what they might, her brother loved her almost better than everything in the world besides, and she felt, alas! that a crisis in her life was at hand, where sympathy and assistance would be invaluable.

Neil quitted his canine body guard, and coming over, seated himself by his sister's side, taking her hand in his.

"This then is the question, Kathie, as I was comin' to at the first. Was it by the hill you came?"

"What other way should I?" returned Kathie, mildly. "It's you has asked and I answered that before."

"True for ye. Holy saints, that's not the question at all, but this. Perhaps some one was after matin' and spakin' with ye as ye came on yer way:—it might be his lordship as would offer that insult."

"Lord Lismore has been speakin' with father."

"About you?"

"He has that."

"And to marry you?"

"'Tis that he wishes still."

"And father?" pursued Neil, half starting from his chair.

"He's growin' to favor his lordship's wishes. He repeated to me this hour all that was said, and added it was a wonderful condescension altogether for a lord—an earl's son—and few would ever have the reasons I had to be proud."

Saying this Kathie burst into tears. Neil sprang to his feet.

"Curse—"

"O! stop, Neil, stop, or ye'll be sorry one day;" springing up and flinging her arms round her brother's neck, while the dogs bounded forward with a yell.

"Curse Lord Lismore! It's meself as will curse him and every English nobleman on Irish soil that ought to be free. Curse him head and foot for a blackguard, and I'll shoot him like a limpin' hare."

"O, then, it's only *him*. Curse away, only it can do no good. As to shootin', Neil, ye're rash, but I trust ye'll never be

wicked. Better I should be bound in an unhappy marriage, than you should feel the hangman's rope."

"But you're not to marry his lordship, come whatever. Think o' yerself livin' up at the Hall as its mistress, and lookin' down on yer father's cabin here. What'd it be but despisin' yer own flesh and blood? Think o' shinin' in jewels in London, bought with the tithes and hearth-money o' yer countrymen and brithers. Arrah, I'd be huggin' the conscience of one that's myself and the murtherer of a big blackguard and spalpeen, sooner than the conscience ye'd carry in yer buzzum that day—barrin' the fact o' Glyn Brod-rick a suicide because o' yez. Say, Kathie—say for a darlint, ye niver *will* marry his lordship, niver. Sure ye see the two dogs glintin' up for yer answer now."

"I wish you'd be sendin' the dogs from here. They look as fierce as if hind's blood was upon their noses. Did they never taste that same, Neil?" significantly. "What good are the bastes, save it's to get us all into trouble?"

"What's the girl manin', sure? Girls are the quarest wid their hintin' and glintin'. I ask yer promise of refusin' his lordship, as I know you intind, and off ye go on a question of dogs and game."

"Sure, need I promise what ye well know, then? I'll never marry his lordship if I can help it—though it's a fool ye are intirely, Neil"—hiding her cheek lovingly in his breast—"to be spakin' o' Glyn that way. He'll never be shortenin' his days for the likes o' any girl in the country—as why should he that can have his pick o' them that's left? *But when ye talk, Neil, o' savin' me out of his lordship's power, is it that way ye're doin' at all? I'd not be blamin' ye with a word, Neil, but who was it supped his friends on venison at the Sign o' the Elk, and where, Neil, did the venison come from—that's all?*"

"Has his lordship accused me?—tell me that, now."

Neil struggled for a bold front still; he even put the interrogation with the spirit of one prepared to redress his own grievances; but in spite of himself the brightness of his eye went under a little cloud of guilty fear; so that the dogs who took their cue from him, instantly crawled away ashamed toward the duskiest angle of the room.

"What's that!" and joined almost to the startled exclamation, Kathie's shriek rang through the dwelling.

A crash, sounding in the quiet like a falling thunderbolt, was followed by the tones of an angry voice and a tramping that shook the hillside in which the village stands. The door of O'Connor's cottage was burst open, and in rushed a man with glaring eyeballs and lowering brow, his mouth wide open in desperate panting for the breath of life, and holding grasped in his right hand a stout club uplifted in the air.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE GERMS OF REBELLION.

"So 'ere you hare, you young poacher," gasped the broken individual, flourishing his baton—"caught at. Now you'll come halong o' me, to hanswer haccordin' to the charge of stealing his lordship's deer. Call hoff your 'ell-'ound curs—call 'em hoff, or I'll 'alve their 'eads for 'em. Hif you 'urt a Hinglishman, you hinsult the queen on 'er throne."

"Yer welcome to a fair fight wid the craythurs, and let kill who may," shouted back Neil O'Connor. Then thinking better of it, he spoke to the dogs and spared the frightened gamekeeper. "Rookh!—Eric! Don't be makin' yerselves sick at the stomach directly. Faix, rest ye a bit, then go swaten yer mouths wid a taste o' the kerrion lamb that's lyin' in the ditch over the downs."

Fierce as they seemed, the brutes retired at once at his bidding; and having waved them close within a corner, young Neil O'Connor wheeled again to face his adversary with the dignity of an orator appearing before an audience.

And truly no meagre audience was there. Men, women and boys—the whole village—had collected; and the poor gamekeeper who just before had gloated in fancying himself a corn on her majesty's toe, not to be trodden on with impunity, standing on the threshold whither the assaulting dogs had compelled his retreat, now looked wistfully over his two shoulders—seeing himself blockaded by a surging mass of already impatient and incensed humanity, with perplexing doubts regarding his personal safety.

"Well, and here I am, Morgan Bird. Will it plaze ye to take me?"

"No, no," wailed little Kathie, clinging to her brother from behind, and quite hidden from view by his stout person. "Sure, sure, his lordship will forgive my brother if he's once done wrong. And why should ye be stormin' into a peaceful dwellin' this way? *That's* not his lordship's command, O no."

"What helse should hi do, hey? You hact, miss, has hif you didn't know me hafter hall. Me—Morgan Bird—gamekeeper to Lord Lismore, of Lismore 'all."

"County Killarney," interposed Neil, by way of defining the point more indisputably, and rounding his period with a double shuffle, at the end of which he again challenged his lordship's menial to take him into custody.

"Niver a bit of it!" rang from the crowd, and as an earnest of their intentions, a missile, seeking a hasty passage through the gamekeeper's hat, knocked it off his head.

"Ha! ladies and gentlemen," he said deprecatingly, "hi happeal to you as Hirish subjects—"

"Irish freemen," corrected a voice.

"Bryan the Brave," cried another.

"Will you 'ear me?" vociferated the gamekeeper.

"Ear 'im—clane off with his two ears—don't let 'im be askin' the favor twice," came from the crowd, and a general peal of laughter modified for the moment the mob spirit beginning to prevail.

The gamekeeper essayed once more.

"This fellow feasts an 'ost of friends on 'are."

From the crowd—

"On air is it? Wake food that, intirely."

"He has feasted friends hon 'are and venison."

A voice—"Count myself among yer frins for nixt time, Neil, my boy—I'll be servin' to the best o' me poor ability."

"Now where does the son of a poor laborer, that's at present be'ind 'and with his rent—"

"You lie, you sneakin' blaggard ye!"

"Where, hi hask, does this honest young gentleman get 'are and venison for to feast an 'ost? Hi hanswer—'e steals hit. To-night 'e lassoed a fine deer in the park, hand was about for to bring 'im hof, when hi 'ove in sight. Hof course 'e scampered; hand, in dooty, hi 'unted 'im down the 'ill, har-

rivin' hin time to 'ear the door when hit bursted hopen to hadmit 'im—hand 'ere 'e his."

The account appeared to have interested to such a degree that no one had interrupted. But the instant he ceased to speak, Kathie O'Connor bounded before the gamekeeper.

"It's a liar somebody called ye jist now, and that's true for ye. As sure's the life's in me bosom, Neil O'Connor's the brother as hasn't been outside for this whole evenin' jist. Nor the door hasn't opened since my father went out, an hour and more ago. Repate yer words to the conthrary foreninst our neighbors here if you dare. All was peaceful as the grave till yerself come thunderin' down upon us, like a snow-slide among a flock o' feedin' sheep—and it's truth I speak, Morgan Bird."

"Down with the English blackguard! Trate him to his desarts! We're heeded less than deer in the parks and cattle abroad—they kill and ate us without fattenin'"—were some of the expressions through which the assembled throng gave vent to feelings that burn continually in the breast of the Irish nation, as fires are said to burn beneath the earth's crust on which we dwell.

Each instant added to the excitement, and the fire known by its smoke and barely smothered, appeared certainly destined to break forth in volcanic fury; lumps of clay were fired profusely, with occasionally a more dangerous missile; while to the repeated and earnest declaration of the gamekeeper that "he would go," the only answer vouchsafed was a denser huddling around his cowering form. When instead of making Neil O'Connor a prisoner, he sought to take refuge within the cottage, the master called the two dogs and held them in abeyance, ready to pounce upon the victim at a word; and even tender-hearted Kathie burst into a laugh of derision at the wretch's dismay, with the tables so completely turned against him.

At this crisis Providence interposed to prevent any distressing issue, by sending Bryson O'Connor back to his home. A wondering inquiry or two which he put, served to call attention, and way was made for him immediately. Almost in unison with his coming, the crowd swayed backward, awe-struck at the vaguely defined appearance of a horseman dashing down the hill toward their midst.

Shadowy at best, and now and then vanishing quite in some

hollow, or for a second blotted out in the deeper gloom of an evergreen tree, dripping blank darkness from its boughs, he well might have passed for a phantom, save for the loud echo of his horse's hoofs. If terror was struck to any timid hearts, his voice, too—the voice of his lordship from the Hall—dissipated it speedily. Almost before his headlong speed was checked opposite O'Connor's door, the crowd gathered there had melted away and disappeared.

The gamekeeper, not yet sufficiently recovered to stir, cowered against the doorpost; but a stern reprimand from his lordship sent him quickly away. His lordship, leaning over, shook the elder O'Connor warmly by the hand, assuring him it was all a mistake of Morgan Bird's, and desiring him to come up to the Hall at ten next morning. He then bowed to Kathie; but the maiden, willing to transfer the honor to her brother who was standing by, made no sign of returning the salutation; while the latter, full well knowing it was never intended for himself, of course passed it by likewise without recognition. Lord Lismore then rode back toward the Hall—not, however, by the steep hill-path over which, in his impetuous haste to arrive and put an end to the too zealous proceedings of his gamekeeper, he had risked his neck in coming, but by the less direct and safer highway.

Quiet being now completely restored, the O'Connor family shortly retired to rest. Through contrast with the preceding hour, the stillness all about the cottage seemed stiller than usual to Kathie, as she crept into the cot in her little bedroom. If her girl's heart was a correct barometer, a great storm of trouble was brewing. Indeed, she could be at no loss in what direction to look for it, but the events of the evening had left her in doubt and perplexity as to whither she could flee from its power.

One week ago, Kathie would have sworn upon the holy Evangelists, that nothing should ever induce her to listen to his lordship's proposals. Now, facts were brought to light which, while they did not in the least lessen her feeling of repugnance to the union, compelled her to fear lest she might be left without the power of choosing her course. A father's and brother's honor, and even liberty, threatened to be laid in the balance against her hopes and desires.

The implied assertion of Morgan Bird that her father was in arrears in his rent, while it would not for a moment be

believed by his friends and neighbors, was only the repetition of what O'Connor had himself given his daughter to understand. The wild ways that boy Neil had latterly taken up, were, he said, the occasion of the difficulty; and now there appeared but one way of satisfying his lordship and cancelling his just demands. So the petty profligacy of one child must be the altar of sacrifice to the other.

No wonder Kathie's little head refused to lie still on its pillow, and tossed restlessly till its sunny, silken hair became twined and twisted in inconceivable disorder. And ever and anon the while, she heard, or fancied, strange tappings about the house, enough to have fixed the reputation of the place for being haunted, had it been a wayside inn where a murder was known to have been committed, instead of her own peaceful home.

Footsteps in the low-roofed chamber above, she certainly did hear; she wondered what should keep her brother out of his bed after this hour. Perhaps he was recollecting himself at last, and too sorry to sleep. Ah, how dear he was to her. She had a good mind to rise and creep up the stairs and try to comfort him. Innocent little Kathie!

At that moment her brother Neil, who had made no movement toward undressing, was leaning out of his window so far he was but just able to retain his balance, listening to a song in the distance, ringing out on the air of a clear, starry night.

"O! to have lived like an *Irish Chief*, when hearts were fresh and true,

And a manly thought, like a pealing bell, would quicken them through and through;

And the seed of a generous hope right soon to a fiery action grew,

And men would have scorned to talk and talk, and never a deed to do."

Myriad stars seemed shooting from Neil O'Connor's eyes, while eagerly his ears drank in the music. He had meant to be very quiet there in his chamber; the end for which he was most impatiently waiting, being an assurance that the seal of slumber was set on the eyelids of the other members of the household; it was no longer of any use, however; he forgot everything, and with voice like a "pealing bell," joined in the exhilarating refrain:

"O! the iron grasp,  
 And the kindly clasp,  
 And the laugh so fond and gay;  
 And the roaring board,  
 And the ready sword,  
 Were the types of that vanished day."

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE MIDNIGHT MESSAGE.

**HARDLY** had the echoes of his sonorous voice died away, when Neil stood within his sister's chamber, uttering her name in a whispered exclamation.

"Sure, Neil, and what is it you'd be having, and why haven't ye gone to bed an hour ago like a decent lad?"

"Och now be swate, Kathie—ye know ye're the pulse of me heart. And tell me if ye're belavin' father's asleep."

"Like peat o' the bog. Though if ye's carin' to kape 'im so, wouldn't it be the wiser doin's not to cut him in strips with the likes of a song sharp-set out o' yer windy?"

"Faix, don't ye be after blamin' me at all, at all—for how could I help it anyhow? The saints be witness, I clapped me two hands to me mouth, though for the matter o' that, I'd better ha' clapped 'em over me ears. No sooner as I heard Mike Rattigan's voice beyant the shaw, than me own flew from me mouth, like a martin from a cat's when you choke her in the throat. So be aisy now, and I've come to tell ye a trifle and close a clever bargain wid ye; since it's no good o' tryin' to desave ye, and yer eye as wakeful in bed as the knot-hole in a door."

"And what, Neil, should be the nade o' desavin' a body at all? Ah, Neil, it's fetchin' yerself to grief ye are, as swift as the wind, lavin' out yer father and me."

"Arrah, Kathie darlint, lave prachin' to his riverence, and don't ye be after dramin' o' harm to any o' us. It's only a crumb o' kindness I'd be givin' to a fellow craythur under the same roof."

"Then that's father or meself."

“Naither is it though, at all; but if somebody that’s bearin’ the name o’ Hugh Flannery or the likes, had bursted in the door of a cellar to the ind o’ savin’ hisself out o’ the claws of a *Bird* o’ prey, what less could ye be doin’ than lettin’ him dacently off when all was paceable at last? Did ye hear any tip-tap-pins above, Kathie, wid the same for answers from below—say, did ye now?”

“Ay did I. Ah, Neil, I’m ashamed o’ yez, to be knowin’ signals wid one o’ *his* stamp, wid the brain under his hair as full o’ mischief as the air of beetles in a simmer night. And so it’s himself, that’s Hugh Flannery, as was chased from his lordship’s park this very blessed evenin’.”

“Ah, but ’twas niver Hugh’s intintion to bring off game at all. The worst is, he’s fond of a bit o’ fun, as I know. Thin don’t ye be makin’ a hullabaloo, but turn a kay, jist, on the little secret I’ve let into yer ear this hour. Good night, Kathie—I’ll be goin’ to see the lad well off; as, sure, wouldn’t ye do yerself in my place?”

Kathie just discerned the figure of her brother gliding over the threshold, and heard him close the door of her room softly. She was alone, but less inclined to rest than ever, and the first beam of moon-rising now stealing in, showed the little white figure upright amid the tossed waves of bed-linen, looking like Venus when she sprung from the foam of the sea. But wringing her hands anon with a low wail—was it for herself or another?—she seemed the banshee sitting in the fog of the meadow by the rath.

Five minutes after Neil slipped from her chamber, Kathie heard the footsteps of two persons without, and while she still listened, three just audible taps, like they came from the beak of a winter-king, were given on her window-sash, by way of setting the seal of strictest privacy on such small items of behaviour as the master of the house might not feel prepared to approve.

She heard their suppressed laughter as the two hale fellows moved away. But though she listened long for signs of her brother’s return, she listened in vain. Doubtless then he had gone with Hugh Flannery to the Elk, there to celebrate the triumph of the latter in having so successfully eluded the vengeance of his lordship’s gamekeeper.

After some time Kathie’s young heart, having thrown off the effervescence of its woe in sighs and moans, with the

addition of a few teardrops, agreed to bide its time; and sinking back on her pillow, she knew not when, with a pair of dimpled hands clasped over her head, the blue eyes closed in slumber. Dreams—not white-winged, sweet-voiced messengers of peace and hope, flitting upward from the cave of Somnus; but dark, uncertain, haggard forms, such as, boding good to none, steal forth by back ways, perchance with concealed weapons, attended her couch and worried the rest so hardly obtained.

At first the visions were very confused—morsels of real events mingled with an intangible mass of imagination, all utterly joyless, if not frightful and hateful. But by-and-by these culminated in the sleeper's suddenly finding herself at the bottom of the little crystal lake in which the village bathed its feet, gently swayed about by the tide, while fishes came and went, feasting on her eyes; and she recollected to have drowned herself there as the wretched bride of Lord Lismore.

Next she saw his lordship plunging down the hill upon a horse with distended nostrils and streaming mane, and without saddle or bridle. Just as they entered the village, the animal fell dead, and the fall broke the rider's neck. The horse turned to a deer, which Neil and Hugh carried between them; while Glyn Brodrick stood by, repeating her name and anxiously desiring that she should endeavor to resuscitate the dead nobleman—at which she was too indignant to answer him a word.

"Kathie! Kathie! Kathie!"

She roused at last. It was her brother calling her in suppressed tones, outside the little window.

In a moment Kathie had sprung from her bed and raised the sash, for there was a cadence in the voice repeating her name so low and earnestly, which startled her into apprehension of some new calamity. Had Neil's mad self-indulgence drawn him into trouble again—something perhaps from which no possible sacrifice of hers could extricate him—none avert disgrace and ruin from the family? O! if Neil would but have kept at home to-night, out of the influence of loose companions.

"And sure, Neil, what is it now?"

"Ye may well ask that. Only to think now of Rose Brod-

rick took sick at Flannery's aunt's, and wantin' to see yez 'fore it's too late."

"O Neil, but it can't be so bad. Why, you frighten me as helpless as any infant. It's meself as bade Rose good-by at her own mother's past four o' the clock on this blessed afternoon. Neil, you nadent take offence at me, but I vinture to ask, could ye be countin' upon yez ten fingers—and two of 'em's thumbs—the number o' dhrinks ye's tuk at the public house to-night along o' Hugh Flannery?"

"By this and by that, now, it's all as I tell ye, jist. Niver the taste o' whisky has come to me lips this night, nor the day that's foreninst it, aither; and allowin' the public house to be as clare o' rats as it's been clare o' meself these seven days that's a wake—or I may double the time—thin they as kapes it must be after feedin' their cats, or let 'em starve—and I say it as knows."

"Hush thin, Neil—yez speakin' too loud. I'll be askin' pardon, but ye seemed wild-like in yer spache, and it's altogither so strange what ye told about Rose."

"And will ye be wastin' time that way, and hersilf fit to die? It's a purty frind ye are. Can iver ye belave the son o' yer mither, and make haste to come along wid ye? Or may be ye'll like me to go back and say ye's too slapy."

"Ah no, Neil—it's ready I am in a minute. Kape yer standin', and I'll be comin' out o' the windy to yez, instead o' through the kitchen and maybe waken father nadeless. O! Rose, darlint!"

She flew back to the bedside and dressed hastily, trembling all the while, because of the tidings, so sudden, so dreadful.

## CHAPTER IV.

### ALL UP.

WHEN she was ready Neil assisted her to alight from her little cab of a chamber. That he suffered excitement was highly appropriate; the abruptness of his movements in snatching her up and setting her down, left her spinning like a top; and she had at least four different glimpses of the broken door admitting to the cellar behind the house, before she could recover her standing.

"What will father be thinking as did it?" she involuntarily ejaculated, remembering the scenes of earlier evening.

Her brother was not so much overcome by the perilous situation of his sweetheart, but he was ready with a reply:

"Let him be chargin' the break to Barney M'Cann's pigs—only it's meself must be home in saison to dhrop a few tracks o' their blaggard feet in the mud foreninst the sill."

"Ah," rejoined his sister, "I'd not be contrivin' stories to desave, and maybe death scarce half a mile away. But I'm thinkin' if it's to shield Hugh is yer wish, we naden't be sayin' why the crowd of our neighbors didn't press agin the door and by chance it bursted in." And with the last words, Kathie fetched a sob—not for the broken door at home, but for the friend whom she expected shortly to behold at very death's door.

Remarkably calm was her brother, as he drew her arm through his, and hurried her down the path. But she knew that he loved sweet Rose Brodrick, and well might she tremble for the result on his character, should this one golden link to virtue be snapt asunder. In silence as they went forward, Kathie recalled a saying of her brother's not long since—that should the girl die or marry another, never priest, he could swear, would receive marriage fee from him.

"And where is this we're goin'?" cried Kathie, suddenly—"it's not the road to Mrs. O'Reilley's at all."

"Niver ye mind," returned her brother, in the solemn tone so strange to him as of itself to thrill one with dread—"it's ourselves as is to go by the way o' Rose's home and be tellin' the family."

The arrangement struck Kathie as singular, inasmuch as Mrs. O'Reilley's, the home of her nephew Hugh, was but half a mile away in a direct course, while to take Brodrick's in the circuit, would more than double the distance. She regretted too the time thus lost in reaching her suffering friend.

"What's that I see!" exclaimed Kathie again—"beyant Murderer's Rock. It's gone and vanished they are already, but if ever I set my two eyes on anything in life, there was three of 'em, so thin, one could read the guidepost through their bodies—they jist was after lookin' once this way, and went out like shaddies. Neil, wid you here, I'm half araid to go on."

"Arrah, don't now be makin' a scairt pigeon o' yerself. Indade thin, it's shaddies they are, and no more. Ye see the three dead trees in a row, jist there in the stubble field, and the moon dancin' in and out o' the clouds desaved ye. So bring along yer lightsome feet, my darlint, and we'll be past in a snap o' the eye."

And past they went, but not alone, for out of the shadow of the noted wayside rock, bounded some half a dozen o' their young associates, Hugh Flannery and Glyn, and Rose Brodrick among the number, all amid such laughter and clapping of hands as only a bevy of Erin's sons and daughters, bent on a harmless spree, know how to invoke. Kathie was confounded.

"See! it's sorry she is," cried Rose, assuming a dozen graceful postures in as many seconds, "at finding me well and long to live."

"Is it for this—" turning to Neil—"ye called me that's Kathie O'Connor, out o' my bed, biddin' me haste or it might be too late."

"True for ye, Kathie, and isn't it nigh twelve o' the clock and late alriddy. Will ye be done, now? Rosy," he added to his sweetheart, "I tould her ye was fit to die, and so ye are, the vargin knows, but by the powers, ye's fitter to live."

He flung an arm boldly around her waist as he spoke, which she in merry maiden prodigality of that in which she knew herself to be so rich, as suddenly flung off, and darted across to say in Kathie's ear:

"It's to have a dance we are, and I feared, sure you'd never be comin' for that at this time o' the night. Mother's waitin' for us this blessed minute, wid lit candles in every corner."

"And that's who's Hugh's aunt, as ye know yerself," interpolated Neil.

True it was, Mrs Brodrick stood in that relation to Flannery; though from the way Neil had spoken in summoning his sister, it was naturally supposed, as he designed it should be, his reference was to another.

"I'd been wearin' my checked frock had I known," Kathie whispered back to Rose.

"Niver the worse can be any you wear," returned Glyn, catching her words, "savin' for the length that should hide your ankles, me Bloom o' Killarney."

Away now went the party, over the stile, across the field, brushing the dew from the grass with their fantastic steps. Having made probably a couple of miles of this last quarter of a mile, they arrived in the best of aptitudes for the impromptu festivities.

Flannery, mounted upon the table, began tuning his fiddle; the young fellows grasped their partners and whirled into place for a highland reel. Not till then was it discovered that one division lacked a member. However, some were equal to the emergency; poor Mrs. Brodrick, though pleading a rheumatic knee and protesting she was "too ould by half," was unceremoniously pressed into service to supply the deficiency; and indeed, as her blood warmed with the exercise, hardly one there appeared lighter of foot or in heart.

For the space of ten minutes the dancing went on in perfect abandon, when just as the spirit of the revel seemed to have reached its height, suddenly as if a thunderbolt had stunned them one and all, the hilarious company stood still in their tracks, facing, with open eyes and mouths, the door. None had heard the door opened, but there it was, wide ajar, and, between the two posts, leisurely reviewing the carnival, appeared the new priest of the parish, Father Dunlea.

It was a trying moment to all, but more especially to Mrs. Brodrick, cut short in the most animated balancing up to Mike Ratigan.

"Faith," was the good woman's internal exclamation, but she couldn't have uttered a word of anything for the life of her, "I'd nixt as lief his riverence had come upon us at a Friday's dinner o' mate."

But they that feared the disapproval of Roger Dunlea on that occasion, did so on account of his being as yet almost a stranger among them. The holy father felt not the slightest objection to a dancing party, unless, indeed, it left him out; and ready enough was he, in the present instance, to count himself in at the entertainment, and give and take his full share in the general enjoyment. With excellent grace Mrs. Brodrick resigned her place to him, declaring she had but "stood up to plaze the childers," and the dance went on with fresh zest, nor was discontinued till a second volley of cock-crowing from the shed warned the revellers in time, sending them home, as Neil O'Connor said—"chased by the daybreak—and raal Peep o' Day Boys."

## CHAPTER V.

## A PROJECT AND A PROPHECY.

BRYSON O'CONNOR was rather less ignorant of the night's proceedings, than his children were glad to believe. To be sure, his knowledge included no definite programme of events; but of both Neil's and Kathie's absence from home through the greater part of the night, he did know, and the rest was easily imagined. Not that he would by any means object, ordinarily, to what the priest himself had taken a part in; but, besides considering that his son's tendencies to dissipation needed depletion rather than cultivation, his designs concerning Kathie made him regret everything, which, by binding her more closely to her own class, separated between her and her future prospects.

Lord Lismore had that day distinctly proposed to the father for his daughter's hand, as a cancelment of certain existing obligations on the part of the two O'Connors, father and son. And the father of Kathie tried hard to think his lordship did them a great honor. His success in the undertaking was not perfect, yet decidedly greater than that he met with in laboring to convince his daughter on the same point. At this time it had not occurred to him that her consent was not indispensable. As to Neil, though well knowing the lad hated everything English, yet the advantage to himself which such a connection would bring—the ruin to be averted—must, he believed, induce him to use every exertion to effect that important end.

Fowls are not unfrequently astonished by seeing another species than their own come forth from the eggs on which they have been sitting; and not every parent can calculate to a nicety what is in a son or daughter. Bryson O'Connor would yet find that out.

At ten o'clock, punctual to his lordship's appointment, O'Connor was at the Hall. The nobleman received him with a graciousness that quite affected him, remembering, as he

always did, that he was in arrears, and knowing that any other tenant would, in the same circumstances, have been stripped of the rags he wore, and turned out homeless.

Not entering at once on the business in hand, his lordship conducted his peasant visitor about the grounds, showing him the glory thereof, saying, in everything but words, "You see what a wonderful personage it is, who is willing to connect himself with a peasant's daughter." The other felt the influence, secretly glorying in his marvellously good fortune. And in one view, it must be confessed, it was a rare honor which his lordship conferred.

Lord Lismore was fifty years old; in person still erect almost to stiffness. He had digested a vast amount of Number One beef in his day, but more recently, for some reason, the results of good dining were less apparent on him; his once rotund body had a good deal collapsed; the cheeks that had stood out with fatness, now hung down like the wattles of a turkey cock, and about as blue, and his flesh generally had very much the consistency of a water bed. His hair, naturally thin and bristling, was at this time paying tithe in silver to that inexorable landlord, Time.

His lordship had been once married; that was long ago. He married for what he had not inherited along with his title, save in stinted measure—namely, money. He got what he bargained for, and was satisfied. The Lady Alice married him for love; her speculation deserved better than his, but the machinery of this world isn't well adjusted yet. She made a failure—an utter, deplorable failure—and, upon finding out the fact beyond a doubt, she went into a decline, and died two years from their wedding-day.

Lady Alice went to heaven, and his lordship to Ireland. She went in white, the emblem of purity; he in black, by some supposed to be emblematic of sorrow. Let us do him the justice to say he was a better mourner than he had been a husband. The woe was a quarter of an ell deep on his hat, or about the same as the snow on the ground, at the time of his coming over to purchase one of the finest estates in County Killarney; the crape above and the snow beneath, presented a delightful contrast, as he walked up the path to the church portal on a Sunday morning, anxiously observed by the peasantry shortly to come under his lordly rule. Being, fortunately, a tall man, his badge of widowhood was so ad-

vantageously displayed, it would have seemed a folly for him to take the trouble of carrying it aloft on a pole; the folly he was not guilty of.

When spring advanced, Lord Lismore came to reside in Ireland; and ever since, during half or two-thirds the year, he was there, watching personally, and with vigilant eye, over his affairs; the remainder of the time, these were intrusted to an agent, while he went up to get a taste of London society. Ireland was the place for filling his sponge, England for squeezing it out.

At the earliest period of her father's becoming the tenant of his lordship, Kathie O'Connor was not born. The "Bloom of Killarney" was somewhere in the regions of the Unknown—perchance forming a bouquet for an angel hand, which, when it was flung upon the stage of earth, must of course have been in his lordship's honor, and designed, like everything good in Ireland, for his approbation.

Seventeen years had brought him to this conclusion, and to-day, Lord Lismore, leaning against the trunk of an elm in his park, uttered his sentiments to Bryson O'Connor, without any reserve—the latter, in his Sunday jacket, which he had thought due to the occasion, taking an humble attitude, yet savoring of a certain conscious self-importance, as the unquestioned proprietor of one thing which a grand nobleman found it worth his while to covet.

"You are now in arrears, Mr. O'Connor, as I said yesterday, and as you yourself must be well aware, in the sum of seven pounds, six shillings sixpence. A good deal of money, it must be confessed, for one in your circumstances to owe."

"True for yer lordship," replied the other, humbly, though without the abject discouragement he had felt previous to knowing how his lordship proposed that the debt should be cancelled. "My only son is the right dacent boy of his mither that's dead—Heaven rest her sowl. But it's somethin' in him as wont be aisy. He's a good heart—the lad; but the mischief's in his hands, and the same's brought me to strouble that's his father."

"He's a ringleader," said his lordship, comfortingly. "Young as he is—for I believe the lad is scarcely turned twenty—he has been guilty of almost everything, and, to judge from present appearances, will be worse before he is better."

"I beg your lordship'll not be too hard on the boy," rejoined the father, with a tear in his eye. "If I might be so bould, it's a dale has been charged on him, as I could swear by my life he's not guilty of at all. But as to his lavin' his dogs to worry the squire's flock for sport, I've had the mather to settle with two pounds ten. Then there's the windies smashed and the rick destroyed on the night after the Fair—I'd not be disputin' about it, and that same was a cost to me pocket of four pounds. It's mesilf has worked hard to bread me childers, and I aven have had it in me power to give 'em a smather o' larnin'; and maybe God sint this on me, that I mightn't be makin' mesilf proud. Sure, though, it's not althegither the lad's fault if his father's behind; yer lordship knows the praitie crop came in but poorly this saison that's past."

"Well," said his lordship, "I'm not disposed to pursue this point. It is not necessary, indeed, to dwell on an evil for which a remedy is at hand. Many times the amount you have named is justly due for your son's trespasses upon my grounds, yet I am ready to forgive everything—not only so, but to grant you every indulgence for the future; and I will congratulate both you and myself on so easy and agreeable a method of arranging what else would occasion a disagreeable duty on my part, and ruin on yours. Have you spoken to your daughter concerning my proposal?"

O'Connor dropped his head, answering, in a sort of mumbling tone, that he had.

"How did she receive it?"

"Wid a dale o' silence, yer lordship, sayin' she couldn't be thinkin' o' the thing at all, at all."

"And what then?" quickly responded his lordship, growing red in the wattles; "what then?" And he snapped a twig into inch pieces in his fingers, with a succession of sounds, as if he was trying to get off a pistol, and it missed fire.

"What then is it? Ah, indade, yer lordship, it's not mesilf as knows what nixt to be doin'. But says I to mesilf, says I—Maybe the girl is tuk by surprise, and is frightened jist, so it's not the wise coorse to be seware on her at oncet."

"Very well, Bryson," said his lordship, tightening the rein on his wrath. "That was very discreet in you, undoubtedly."

"I hope it wasn't greatly itherwise, yer lordship."

"Has Miss Kathie a lover?"

"A lover, is it? Niver the same at all, yer lordship, barrin' it's the lad that's Glyn Brodrick by name, and his mither's the widdy woman yenter under the hill—it's Glyn hissilf as has been sparkin' my girl a thrifle—but it's nothin' to mintion, yer lordship."

"If you are sure that affairs in that quarter will not be growing more difficult to manage, we will give Kathie a little time. She is a sensible girl, as well as a beautiful, and a few days' consideration can hardly fail of leading her to see what is so infinitely to her advantage. Of course, I shall depend on yourself to set all this before her in its true light—the benefits on the one hand, and the evil consequences on the other."

"Yer lordship may be certain I'll do my best endeavors," returned the man, sincerely.

"And now to put the question: Is there, in your opinion, a reasonable possibility that your daughter may, after all, continue of the same mind as at present?"

"Savin' yer presence, I'd not be the man that's mysilf to say no."

"In that case, as I said a short time ago, what then?"

The bluish-red wattles were shaking wrathfully.

"Would yer lordship kindly be answerin' the question for me—of what should I do?"

There was a pause of several seconds, making what followed the more impressive. During that time, too, the nobleman's eyes were fixed on the peasant with the intentness of a hunter taking aim at his prey. When the explosion came, it was not loud, but yet tremendous.

"I prefer telling you what *I* should do. However, that is needless—you know already. You know your son will be arrested and sent to prison, as he justly deserves, while yourself and daughter will be turned out into the world, beggars. This is too plain to be misunderstood, and I hope you will attempt nothing but to look it in the face. Come here again one week from to-day.

"Stay," he added, as O'Connor, quailing, turned to move away; "a word concerning this son, who is giving you so much trouble. My advice is, that you send him to America forthwith."

"To America is it?" repeated the overwhelmed parent.

"Thank yer lordship for a benivulent gintleman, but could I bury both me childers?"

The instant those words, in pathetic accents, had left his lips, he would have given his very teeth to have had them unsaid. As though to give Kathie to him, was to see her in her grave! O'Connor crouched, he fairly quivered, in view of what his lordship would do by way of revenging the insult he had so inadvertently offered.

His alarm was groundless. Lord Lismore spoke quietly, insinuatingly.

"*You* could go to America along with your son," he suggested.

"Ah, of course," thought the other; "oncet he gits the girl, he'll not be wantin' her low-bred father shtoppin' in the same counthry wid 'em at all."

His lordship resumed:

"In his own country, Mr. O'Connor, your son is emphatically a dangerous person. If I possess any discernment, he is a seditious sort of fellow, who is destined certainly to bring trouble on others besides his father."

O'Connor stared with wonder and interest.

"There seems," continued the nobleman, "to have been some of the dust—I will say *dirt*—of Owen and Grattan moulded into his composition."

O'Connor brightened up with the thought of his heart—a thought he dared not breathe:

"Heaven grant it may be so—it's the prayer o' me heart. And it's proud o' the lad I am, afther all."

"Before ten years, I say," his lordship went on, "that boy, if he stays here, will be inciting some form of rebellion; while, in republican America, sentiments like his would chime in well enough, and he would do no harm, if he did no good. Here, he is a monkey in a china-shop; there, he would be like the same animal turned out into a barn—he could eut his antics, without danger of dealing destruction at every motion of his restless paw. America's the place for your son."

## CHAPTER VI

## THE CONFSSIONAL.

“‘AMERIKY’s the place for your son!’ That’s mesilf. By all the saints now,” and young Neil O’Connor peered out of the thicket where he had been hidden, listening to every word of the conversation between his father and the noble lord, “it’s not riddy I am to put fut in Ameriky at all—and there goes his lordship as says differenter. Purty times is it whin a dacent lad is to be voted out o’ his own counthry by a tyrant, a ’pressor—a man as had no right to be born at all, and couldn’t ha’ been anywhere under heaven savin’ in England—bad luck to the likes o’ him.”

Springing out of his covert, the speaker with all the emphasis consistent with caution, spit after the noble lord; and even this was not the climax of his irreverent depravity—for he raised his right foot and kicked the air three several times, with not more than twenty rods between the stout wooden shoe and his lordship’s rear. Then he went on, with shaking of head and shuffling of feet and doubling of fists:

“Ye roarin’ blaggard yez, yer thinkin’ to buy a wife as ye’d be buyin’ a horse. Faix, it nades more’n two to make a bargain, whin one of ’em’s not the girl hersilf, nor yither brither. Can ye tell me how purgatory feels?—sure, but ye’ll be able afore ye marry Kathie O’Connor. By me word and me oath, whin she that’s me sister weds wi’ the like o’ yez, she’ll be a widdy the day; and it’s mesilf will faist a party on Englishman outside the Elk, and them as aits ’ll be the sort as squails—for what but pigs could bear the mess on their stummicks, sure? O—ow!”

Where Neil O’Connor spent the remainder of that eventful day, was known only to himself. At supper time he returned home looking an inch or two taller than when he had gone out—though he was really well grown. His face was more changed still; his eye flashed none the less brightly, but there were purpose and thoughtful, sober conscientiousness, in place

of the rattlesome, rollicking expression. There was a certain firmness around the flexible lips always ready to open in laughter, as if they were about to utter deep stirring words of eloquence. In short, the irresponsible boy had suddenly entered upon the dignity of manhood.

His father and Kathie were in the act of sitting down to supper; the latter looked up with an attempt to smile, though her eyelids were very red; and doing so, her gaze fixed on her brother in a kind of rapt admiration. The father, though he gave his son a word of greeting, did not look up; he sat abstracted and nervous through the meal, and rising, took down his hat from the peg, then stood, evidently at a loss whether to go out or stay at home.

"Could ye be givin' me a clane shirt?" whispered her brother, stooping over Kathie's chair.

"Sure could I," returned she in some surprise, but how should ye be wantin' that same? Neil, me good brither, don't be spreein' agin, ye look like ye's meant for a betther thing intirely. If father goes, I'm alone mesilf, and, Neil, I'm in trouble that I'd be tellin' just you and none else. Stop at home, will yez?"

"It's me as knows more alriddy than I'm able to hould. I'll be goin' awhile, but it's rememberin' to be back arly. And don't ye be fayrin' what I'll do outside; sure now I may as well braithe in yer ear, I'll be done wid the thing ye mention—I'll be done indade. It's mesilf as'll set to work wid me two hands, and rub out me scores. Ye'll belave me now, will ye. Now I don't mind tellin' yez it's to confission I'm goin'."

Kathie's eyes upturned on his face, grew more anxious in expression.

"Neil, what's it yez been at?" she inquired in tender reproof.

"Niver anything, the saints be witness. Don't ye be disthrustin' that way, for it's the blissed truth I say, bedad."

"But why," persisted Kathie, "must ye be hastin' to confession this night?"

"Ah!" he answered, playfully kissing her forehead, "wouldn't it be makin' yez the father confessor, did I tell?"

Kathie saw him depart; he walked on alone, even meeting and passing some of his boon companions with a shielded face that prevented recognition. At length he approached a chapel and entered at a small door in the rear. A woman was

met on the threshold, sobbing, her sorrows not all put off at the confessional.

The apartment, not large, was dimly illuminated by a taper. It was a place not unfamiliar to the young man, the child of devout Catholic parents. Against the wall opposite the door of entrance, appeared a bench or shelf, elevated a few inches from the floor—shelf and floor being well worn by the knees and the feet of those who came continually to make confession of sins to the priest.

At suitable height above the kneeling-board, was a small aperture into an unlighted sanctuary; here his reverence waited to receive the sacred deposits of lord and peasant. Of course, what followed when Neil O'Connor knelt there with lips pressed to the aperture, must remain forever unknown.

Not quite. A few moments only have elapsed, when, perhaps through excess of emotion, the subject to be mercifully absolved speaks so loud we catch his words:

"Dreadful's the crime is in me heart to commit. Howly father, the fearfulest of crimes known in all the kingdom, is it. Hardly I'll be namin' it, even here."

We listen and the priest's reply reaches our ear—

"But the crime is not committed?"

"Not yet, yer riverence."

"Then it is no crime, and you have nothing to confess."

"It's the crime I'll be committin' so sure as iver I live. By Saint Patrick, I will, now."

"You mean, you wish an indulgence granted. If the crime is so great, you may not have the means to pay the price. We shall see—go on."

Of the rest we are able to hear only a few words of much significance. "*Whiteboys—English tyranny—Swate Erin—Freedom—Band o' Hope—Up and be doin'.*"

Then came an interval of dead silence. It seemed no human being could be breathing that undisturbed atmosphere, and that the pair bearing the semblance must belong to the departed. Darkness shrouded the priest, but the face of Neil O'Connor was visible in the taper's gleam. The eyes were wide open and unwinking, the mouth immobile as marble. Look and attitude were expressive of the most intense and eager suspense.

A slight movement was heard within. Neil stood up. It was a noble, almost sublime look he wore in that moment.

If it is possible to conceive of one standing between the stake and a throne, and uncertain whether he was to be doomed to the one or exalted to the other, yet determined if death came, to die gloriously as he would reign—you have his picture before you.

He had not much longer to await the result—to know whether the communication he had taken this method of imparting, was successful or unsuccessful—whether he had been wise or rash—whether, in short, he might lay himself on the altar of his beloved country, or must fold his arms idly and listen to the clanking of her chains. His face lighted first with determination, then hope, then expectation, and hastily, the conqueror's ecstasy—all these successive variations, ere receiving any token of what was to come.

There was the slight noise of the opening of a door; a bright, genial gleam from an inner apartment met the priest as he passed out of the confessional. Pausing to throw aside his robe of office, he looked out and beckoned to Neil. The latter fixed his keen eyes upon him, and a flash of satisfaction passed over his features as he obeyed the summons.

The room into which he advanced, was elegantly furnished, and brilliantly lighted by a chandelier with a thousand glittering pendants, their diamond-like sparkle being answered back by the choicest of cut-glass decorating a sideboard of some dark foreign wood, polished to the resplendence of a mirror, and bountifully ornamented with silver trimmings. The ruddier glow from a grate of burning coals blended, deepening and intensifying the noonday radiance which hunted the shadows out of every place of refuge in the apartment.

The luxurious roses of the carpet sprang up around the coarse shoes of the peasant, like living vegetation growing over and hiding an unsightly stump upon the lea. The sofa on which he was invited to sit, of French manufacture, upholstered in green brocatelle, as genially received his person into its elastic depths. Opposite this humble guest, in a voluptuous easy chair, his reverence took a seat.

He was Father Dunlea, the lion and the lamb of the dancing party at the Brodrick's—the lion when he had startled them by his sudden presence, the lamb when coming in to join them, he had brought peace and added delight to the little circle. The priest's hair to-night fell in roguish little ring-

lets over his forehead, seeming to imitate the mazes of the highland reel he had enjoyed with the peasant lasses. Very different from that memory, however, both to him and young O'Connor, was the purpose of the present interview, to which now their attention was at once turned.

A long two hours they sat "like brothers tried;" questions were asked and answered, tales rehearsed and plans projected—there were rapid, impulsive utterances, with kindling looks and significant gestures; but if indeed walls have ears, they were not sufficiently sharp on this occasion to catch the smothered tones in which the conversation was carried on. Oftener than the enamelled clock upon the marble mantel linked the passing hours, the rattle of glasses and decanters marked a requisition upon the sideboard for its rich, rejoicing beverages.

At length the peasant rose to depart. He may be pardoned if, during the lengthy interview he had more than half forgotten the difference of station between himself and his genial host, and certain it is this was the end at which the latter had aimed. Nothing could have been less constrained than their intercourse. Roger Dunlea, indeed, was scarcely a dozen years Neil's senior—still in youthful blood—and as to the dignity of office, or any social distinctions whatsoever, the device in favor of which their hearts were united, was one eminently calculated to set aside these at the will of the parties.

They grasped hands warmly, the priest having accompanied his guest to the door of the apartment. In the outer room the taper had burned out and expired. Who had come and gone there, whispering their confessions to empty air, he neither knew nor troubled himself to fancy; but addressed some parting words to Neil, in which there was an allusion to a future meeting.

"By what name shall the society be called?" he added, as if the important item had not till then entered his head.

"It's whatever yer riverence plazes."

Father Dunlea, still clasping the other's hand with his right, drew the fingers of the left across his forehead, and placing his lips close to young O'Connor's ear, breathed into it—

**"FENIANS—THE FENIAN BROTHERHOOD."**

## CHAPTER VII

## DARK MARGARET.

JUST one week from the evening last mentioned, in the populous streets of Dublin walked a young man quite by himself—unmingling with the human flood—like some river steering its current through the waters of a lake. No one observed him, he observed no one; the mass, like the waves of the lake rolling hither and thither and content with its bounds, concentrated themselves on the present—its cares and pursuits; this one, like the river, discerned a future on his chart of life—heard the drouthy land cry out for his deliverance, the withering leaf sigh forth—"why tarriest thou?"

Already have we seen the change that came over the spirit of our hero, with his being called to a new life, a distinct and sublime sphere of action. The individual himself was aware of this, and yet only to a limited degree. He knew that Bryson O'Connor was his father, and Kathie O'Connor his sister, and from this, more than from any evidence within himself, he deduced his own identity as Neil O'Connor. Still, as we have said, he comprehended his mission only to a limited extent; he had yielded to the hand of destiny, and could trust himself in a noble faith to the unseen guidance.

Near the intersection of two principal streets, the youthful patriot dissevered himself somewhat mysteriously from the passing throng; thence arose the faint echo of his footfalls along narrow winding passages and down short flights of stone steps, amid impenetrable darkness, which, however, appeared not to embarrass him in the least, till finally pausing where a ray of light—an omen of the coming glory—stealing through a keyhole, fell on his person.

Producing a ponderous key, he then admitted himself to a hall, well lighted, and fitted up with all the appurtenances necessary to the convenience of a public assembly. Simultaneously with his entrance, a ponderous bell in a church tower pealed forth directly above his head the hour of nine, each

distinct reverberation gliding into that which succeeded, and all together combining to shake, like the effect of an earthquake, the foundations which surrounded him.

At the first stroke Neil O'Connor took the hat from his head, and having crossed himself, stood reverently with uplifted brow, alone beneath the Eye eternal. The mighty three-times-three that rolled over the insensible multitude, was to his ear the huzza of sainted leaders—martyrs to the cause of liberty, who, from their stations on the battlements of heaven, saw the end of his undertaking, the ultimate and everlasting triumph of the Right.

His lips moved as if in prayer, as, having carefully secured the door behind him, he walked with bared head up the aisle between the rows of empty benches, and halted before the rostrum. At his right was a table with writing materials upon it. He bent over it for a moment, contemplating the pens manufactured from the quills of eagles that had cleft the clouds and over-ridden the mountain summits, the open ink-horn waiting beside the unsullied paper which was to receive the record pointing to a nation's life—or death.

Having drawn a chair conveniently near, for the yet invisible scribe, Neil turned from the table and with some perceptible timidity, ascended to the platform and stood before his anticipated audience. Who had occupied that place before him, or to what purpose this subterranean apartment was previously dedicated, cannot be known; that it was not coeval with the church above, but had merely received remodelling with the date of that by no means modern structure, was very evident. The whole upper end of the hall, roof as well as walls, was in ancient masonry that must have defied the hand of time through centuries, and capable of standing the siege through centuries to come. It probably was one of those vaults of which many have been discovered throughout the island, whose origin and uses are lost in the mists of by-gone ages—the ages of feudal lords, who lived but to slay each other, and whose highest concern necessarily was for the protection of themselves and families against their enemies—of whose history and times these elaborately-wrought caverns are highly suggestive.

Three distinct raps upon the door sounded through the hall. The solitary inmate was at the instant holding his watch in the hollow of his hand, noting with some earnest

expectation that it indicated precisely one quarter past the hour. With hastier step than he had come, Neil returned down the aisle. Some syllables were exchanged through the keyhole; then the door flew open, and its keeper fell back a pace to receive one who had announced himself as *a friend*.

The friend was conducted by a guide, as he seemed to have imperative need, being closely blindfolded. A striking couple they were, to have appeared at that time and place, for the other was a woman. She was blind! A strange guide, one would say, but Nature who had shut her eyes since her birth, knew for what duties she intended her, and what were the needed qualifications.

"Dark Margaret," by her robe a Sister of Charity, reached out her hand to touch that of Neil, smiled and withdrew, when the door was immediately relocked. During that space, the person she had conducted thither remained without word or motion, awaiting the other's pleasure to remove the bandage from his eyes. This was now done, and he stood forth his reverence, Father Dunlea. In the manner of his admission hither, he but executed the plan he had himself formed and insisted upon. To Neil O'Connor, he said, rightly belonged the office of leader, and none could justly complain of what all, without regard to rank of position, were subjected to.

Briefly the "Brothers" listened in rapt silence before the entrance. The tramp of human feet upon the street-pave came below in deadened measure, less distinct to the ear, than to the mind were the footsteps of events, surely approaching to gladden a people and glorify a nation "scattered and peeled." Thus felt each when the knock for admission was repeated.

"Who comes, and with what intent?"

"A friend, and would be more."

"Give the countersign."

"Erin Ullaloo."

The same formality was observed in each instance, till, one after another, twenty-five individuals, among the number six priests, were gathered in the secret auditory. When the clock in the tower sounded ten, Dark Margaret had been dismissed, having accomplished her task till the breaking up of the conclave. Every man in turn, on his eyes being unbandaged, followed up the aisle to a seat.

There was something momentous in the dead silence reign-

ing in that room during the first few minutes; each man thought and felt as he had never thought and felt before. But when at the turning of a key by Neil O'Connor a private depository in the wall opened to reveal a store of shining arms, all with one accord sprang to their feet, and united their voices in loud, soul-stirring cheers.

We will now follow Dark Margaret from the place. At no great distance from where she re-entered the street, her benevolent heart drew her into a by-way not less intricate and far more dangerous than that through which the Fenian members had been guided by her hand—one of those hidden ulcers in the vitals of every great city, which an outward observer could never suppose to exist—which could scarcely be found by searching, though they may be stumbled upon by accident.

No accident was it, however, that brought the Sister of Charity into that circuitous, muddy, uneven little court to-night, where a stranger might have paused in bewilderment and retreated in terror. On she went, and truly her gentle yet confident steps seemed guided by angels. Thus from her youth had she threaded the streets and lanes of the city; and not only were all these familiar to her, but where throughout their bounds was there a dwelling of the poor and afflicted, that had not received her form and heard the soft music of her voice?

Entering a low door, she passed up a flight of rickety stairs, through a passage toward the rear of the wretched building, and opened the door of a chamber. There was a slight rustling as of garments within, but the visitor herself was first to speak.

"Ah, Agnes, the Lord be praised, you have a fire to-night."

"Who but Shister Margaret is it—and how can one that's dark see the fire-gleam?"

"It is indeed me—Dark Margaret—I do not see the fire, but I feel its warmth."

"It's but a bit o' turf McMorny's after b'ilin' his little praties over, that he's ated and gone. Ye don't think he'd be the husband would light a fire for the sake of a wife as hasn't been able to light the same for herself these three year come Christmas? Troth, to the best of my belief, and to the best o' my judgment and opinion, he hears the sound of angel wings in his ear whenever ye come into the alley and it frights

him out o' here, as well it may, sure, seein's tother's the sort o' spirits finds him ready to their likin'."

"It is strange that never in my visits to you can I see your husband, though you say he's a good deal with you. Still you're lying on your narrow bed, Agnes," and the Sister sank upon her knees before the low couch and the emaciated figure it supported. "It's a heavy trial is yours, but may your soul have peace through the merciful Lord."

"Troth," returned the suffering invalid, keeping to her point, "as ye say, and whether ye say it or not, Terence McMorny's the man as kapes to his home enough, whin it's no secret his home was always the betther and him away."

"Well, the good Lord grant you patience," repeated Dark Margaret, meekly. "We all have our trials."

"Ye may well say that," the woman replied, touched at last—"well may ye indade, and it be always night to ye, God bless ye."

"No—it is always day to me," and the kneeling Sister breathed a *pater noster*.

Meantime the poor sufferer had raised herself upon her elbow. The only light in the room was what came from the smouldering peat upon the hearth, fitfully flashing, like savages with fiery eyeballs peering up from their secret lurking-place in eager watching for the moment of raising the war-whoop and hurling themselves upon their work of devastation. Dark Margaret saw not that the eyes looking closely on her calm pale face were lighted with a steadier gleam.

"Shister Margaret," she whispered hoarsely, "d'ye mind iver a body as was under a vow breakin' the same? And what's the consequences? Spake in a breath, or on me conscience, I'll be kilt with fear. It's what I expect your howly leddyship'll sthand my friend betwixt mesilf and him that's Terence McMorny, ilse—. And what now do ye mind is the sthrange sthory about, as I'd be afther thrustin' to yer ear?—ah, the Virgin kape us."

The woman crossed herself, choking with terror, and rapidly went on—

"Pluck the blanket from over me body, and the same from undher me—sorrow take him as has laid me dyin' these three years come Christmas, that's nigh-hand, and may I niver stir from the spot, to die or to live, if I'm tellin' a lie. It's dark ye are, to be sure—God pity yez, but will yer goodness plaze

see wid yer hands what it is the bed as rests me by day and by night."

Dark Margaret lifted the bedclothes as she was directed—not without difficulty, for they were drawn securely as possible around what it was designed to conceal—and with a sensation of horror, found, instead of a cot, a coffin.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### UNDERGROUND MYSTERIES.

**TWELVE** chimes from the tower. At last the city claims a brief respite from the turmoil of business, the weary pavement echoes but seldom to the tread of a human foot, the Babel of sounds is dissolved away, and the clear, pure, noiseless atmosphere comes down from heaven, like a good resolution in the breast of man. But the secret hall was lighted still, the Fenians not having closed this, their first session.

Without the door waited Dark Margaret, her frail figure leaning against the wall that gave out chill and dampness with its support, thinking how like the world's friendship it was, which with its uncostly kindness mingles rebuke for your dependence. Dark Margaret, if she had not seen the world, had felt the atmosphere; and the tale she that evening had listened to was one calculated to make her bless the misfortune which had excluded her from its bitterest experiences.

A song, sung by many voices, reached her ear. She could not have guessed the direction whence came those animated strains—so effectually was the new Brotherhood secured against intrusion from without—but the words she could just distinguish.

### THE PEOPLE'S CHIEF.

Come forth, come forth, thou Man of Men! to the cry of the gathering nations,

We watch on the tower, we watch on the hill, pouring our invocations—

Our souls are sick of sounds and shades, that mock our shame and grief,

We hurl the Dragons from their seats, and call the lawful Chief!

Come forth, come forth, O Man of Men! to the frenzy of our imploring,  
The winged despair that no man can bear, up to the heavens soaring—  
Come, Faith and Hope, and Love and Trust, upon their centre rock,  
The wailing millions summon thee amid the earthquake shock!

We've kept the weary watch of years, with a wild and heart-wrung  
yearning,

But the star of the Advent we sought in vain, calmly and purely  
burning;

False meteors flashed across the sky and falsely led us on;

The parting of the strife is come—the spell is o'er and gone.

The storms of enfranchised passions rise as the voice of the eagle's  
screaming,

And we scatter now to the earth's four winds the memory of our  
dreaming!

The clouds but veil the lightning's bolt—Sibylline murmurs ring

In hollow tones from out the depths—the People seek their King!

Come forth, come forth, Anointed One! nor blazon nor honors  
bearing—

No "ancient line" be thy seal or sign, the crown of Humanity  
wearing—

Spring out as lucent fountains spring exulting from the ground—

Arise, as Adam rose from God, with strength and knowledge crowned!

The leader of the world's wide host guiding our aspirations,

Wear thou the seamless garb of Truth sitting among the nations!

Thy foot is on the empty forms around in shivers cast—

We crush ye with the scorn of scorn, exuvial of the past!

The Future's close gates are now on their ponderous hinges jarring,

And there comes a sound as of winds and waves each with the other  
warring:

And forward bends the listening world, as to their eager ken

From out that dark and mystic land appears the Man of Men!

The song ceased, the door was opened. Within the place  
of meeting, the benches had all been removed and piled against  
the wall, and at set distances throughout the cleared space,  
were stacked muskets with glittering bayonets that seemed to  
hiss like so many tongues of serpents darting on their victims.  
Singly as they had come, with blindfolded eyes and on each  
heart a seal set, went forth those few individuals—the germ  
of an alliance destined speedily to shake the kingdom from  
north to south and from east to west.

So soon had the Englishman's prophecy regarding Neil O'Connor come true, his uttered thought having been father to the other's deed.

The last to go from the place of meeting was he who had been first to come. Dark Margaret's shadowy self had piloted the last of the fleet out of the harbor and into the open sea, each emerging by a different channel; for the passage leading to the hall of mysteries was a hydra-headed monster—and of those who came forth, one remembered only that he had seemed to rise out of the ground which immediately closed under his feet, and another that after ascending many flights of stairs, he had been left, with liberty of vision, to find his way down from a housetop, over a descending series of roofs to the street. From that hour, any member numbered with the laity would as soon have sought the reality of the vagaries of his last night's dream, as have thought to return of himself to the place where on that memorable night the tree of Ireland's long down-trodden liberties was planted in the earth.

Not long—never again in fact, so rapid beyond all precedent proved the growth and spread of what was there begun—was it possible to observe this extreme caution; but it was well to have allowed the taproot to strike deep in the secret soil, that no whirlwind of opposition could level it, no frost of hate scatter its fruit untimely.

A little time Neil lingered behind his companions, then extinguished the only remaining light, crossed the threshold and locked the door. Still something whispered him to delay his departure. The same awe—though less inspiring—that had attended his coming hither earlier in the evening, returned upon him with almost irresistible effect.

He was seized with apprehension amounting to certainty, that were the place left undefended, fatal discoveries would be made ere the dawn. In vain he strove to shake himself free from this seemingly unreasonable fear; it clung to him till he was fain to soothe it into quiet by yielding to its demands.

"Well, and why should I not continue here the remaining hours of the night?" he asked himself, and re-entered the hall—"why not be keeping watch over the new-born Freedom there surely is a Herod would destroy? My life, my soul, are bound up with the interests developing within these four walls, nor is there ever a danger or a responsibility as I'd shun or forego, the howly saints be witness."

He groped his way to a bench and sat down. At first he had no thought of sleep; soon, however, his mind settled into calmness, all anxieties were dispelled, and he sunk into dreamless slumber.

Not more than an hour had gone by, when without stirring from his position he suddenly unclosed his eyes, while the beaded perspiration oozed out upon his brow. What had disturbed his rest thus he could not tell, but his thoughts were instantly upon the papers and gold which had been deposited in a strong box, of which he himself held the key. An instinctive caution held him as one spellbound.

Never was sepulchre more silent than the place during the first moments that succeeded his waking. Yet so certain was he that his alarm could not have been wholly imaginary, he permitted no breath of his nostrils to stir the air with a sound, and even the pulsations of his heart were constrained, as if they might betray his presence.

That passed, and he recognized the noise which had cut short his repose. No stealthy, gliding footstep past his chosen couch, no clicking of a key, great or small, in its faithless lock, no tampering with the instruments of deadly warfare bristling all over the hall—but a steady stroke on stroke—not distant, but yet dulled and deadened by some intervening substance—as if the ponderous bell in the church tower were sounding out the final midnight of the world.

Then another interval of silence. Neil raised himself from his recumbent posture, still cautiously, and sat erect. Opposite him, through the thick gloom, appeared a shining atom, like a star dropped from its sphere and ready to be swallowed up in the diamond mines which no man's hand hath wrought.

Breathlessly watched the beholder for the instant of its disappearance, but with pure, lambent ray it glistened on. His was now the noiseless tread across that stone floor which had resounded with the march of soldiery, few in number yet mighty in will—determined to do or die.

His eye on the mark, step by step he advanced, thrilled with awe and wonder, till in the middle of his subterranean chamber he stopped and stood still—the guiding star had indeed vanished. But no, it re-appeared; steadily nearer he approached, and found the object to be a point of light entering through a chink in the ancient wall.

## CHAPTER IX.

## THE SACRILEGE.

As Neil stooped to bring his eye to the crevice, the sounds which had roused him were again renewed, and fell upon his ear with a sharp distinctness which instantly convinced him that whatever the nature of the mystery might be, the scene of it all was discovered.

It was merely a speck of the olden cement which at last had dropped from its place or cracked apart, and the wall being thick and massive, it was not easy to obtain a view of any objects beyond; but movements as of some person, who now again briefly intercepted the light as once before, were detected by the ear, while the quality of the sounds produced by the mysterious avocation, proved them to be successive blows expended upon no baser a metal than silver.

What wonder the curious interest of Neil grew intense? Forcing his finger into the aperture too minute for observation, he gently endeavored to enlarge it, and meeting with strong resistance, exerted himself more and more, until his whole weight was thrown against the wall; when suddenly a block flew from its place, and what he had coveted to see, stood completely revealed through one astonished glance.

Whether precipitated through the unexpectedly gaping wall, or whether of choice he had made the leap, Neil was too fearfully excited at the moment to remember ever afterward. At his presence there—doubtless even more unforeseen and startling to the strange artisan—if really he was a human, sentient being—the lamp burning upon the ground was instantly extinguished. A little, white-shrouded figure, with face that seemed also to belong to the race of men departed, was one instant visible, and the next blotted out in utter darkness. It had seemed to flash on the intruder a look, that returned, lightning-like, upon a quantity of gold and silver plate, beaten into a shapeless mass, lying beside the lamp.

With the extinction of the light came the sound of snatch-

ing the treasure from the ground; and, all in the same breath, were heard footsteps hastily retreating around an angle of the buried wall. With a clash and jar the block of stone had swung into place. To follow the spectre appeared the sole chance of escape from a living tomb, but Neil thought not of that; to unravel the mystery was still his leading desire, and the instant he could gather up his senses, he started in full pursuit after the echoing footfalls.

He had seemed neither to gain nor to lose on the unknown, as they flew along the narrow passage. Suddenly the guiding sounds ceased. Neil, halting as suddenly, listened with all intentness; a slight sound, as of some one groping eagerly though cautiously, was just audible to the ear; and succeeding this the ring of those mysterious feet ascending a stone staircase. Neil dashed forward in close pursuit.

The pursued, as if only then convinced of being followed, made desperate exertion, surmounting the last half dozen steps of the long flight at a couple of leaps, where at the head he stood fumbling with the energy of life and death, for a way of egress. Presently a door yielded to his hand, and before it could swing in upon its hinges, pursuer as well as pursued had entered the main auditory of the church, through the chancel—the former being only made aware of the locality by scrambling over some kneeling cushions and dashing a crucifix off the altar.

At this time, so nearly overtaken was the flying fugitive, the other believed he heard the panting for breath, and clutched at him repeatedly, still following down the principal aisle of the church; till midway there he stumbled over something icy cold, which went down with a powerful crash—from that instant all around was dead silence. The moon breaking through a cloud, sent in her beams at the crystal dome, and showed a statue of the Virgin broken in fragments, and scattered along the aisle.

No living object was to be seen. Neil sought for the secret entrance in vain, after having tried all the doors and found them fast locked. He had proved that he was not timid or very superstitious, nevertheless the ending of a mystery in a deeper mystery—the transition of a human form with fleeing limbs and audible breath, to an insensible statue—were too much; he scarce could believe where he was and the process by which he came there, and the supernatural horror which

crept over him for a few moments denied him the power of motion.

Praying to be forgiven the unintentional sacrifice, he gathered reverently as if they were human bones the relics of the marble Mary; at the same time his heart seemed to stand still, and the dead cold of the marble to enter his whole frame.

After this he began seriously to consider his situation, a prisoner in the place. Quite probably the church would be opened for mass at an early hour in the morning—no long time to wait, but what then? What account could he possibly render of himself which would be for a moment believed? A little while before, had this strange thing happened, he might have dwelt entirely on the personal consequences—the disgrace, perhaps punishment, of being found there with all the circumstances against him; now, very different emotions stirred his breast, as one not any longer belonging to himself, but consecrated to his country and his country's God. How would his new friends view their leader henceforth, and what would be the effect on the great enterprise in which they had embarked with him?

While these troubled thoughts were passing in his mind, Neil stood leaning against a pew in the aisle, near the spot where the image had been broken. The moon gliding in and out among white clouds, like a shallop amid beds of lilies, alternately shed and withheld her soft radiance. At a moment when the light favored, his eye fell on what appeared to be some portion of the statue which had rolled aside within one of the pews, and been overlooked.

On examination, however, it proved to be a veritable specimen of the work which was going on in the regions below at the time of the discovery being made—a silver chalice inclosing a cross of gold set with rubies, was crushed in an unsightly lump, fit to excite the indignation of all who have a soul to honor sacred things. It was a profanation not unlike Belshazzar's which brought down on the head of the proud Assyrian king the awful vengeance of offended Deity—the vessels of the temple of God desecrated to an unholy purpose.

The church had been robbed, and the robber might be still within the walls, but more probable he had made his exit through some of the mysterious processes of which he was master. The discovery, while it did way with ascribing the

events of that night to any supernatural causes, increased rather than diminished our hero's anxiety respecting results.

The more he thought, the more it seemed that certain doom impended over him, till horror ran through every vein. He who but a few hours before had stood as the chosen prototype of his nation to an end indescribably glorious, beheld himself stamped with a felon's disgrace, forsaken of his friends and derided of foes. Was it through fate, or through folly, the hopes so incomparably bright had been so suddenly wrecked!

Soul-sick he closed his eyes, thinking of dear little Kathie, and of one even dearer, of the father his conduct had often grieved, and of the home where he had dwelt contentedly ere his new destiny had opened up to his vision, and he was not ashamed to weep.

A light brighter than that of the moon flashed on his eyelids. He started to his feet with an involuntary cry. Even as when too late the impious Babylonian ruler was warned, a hand was seen writing on the church wall in letters of fire. Not from burning censer in the hands of the priest anointed, arose those wreaths of smoke to the lofty dome; the horrified spectator saw incendiarism added to the sins whose wages he was to receive.

The church was on fire. It had probably been set with a slow match prior to the robbery, in the expectation that thus the latter crime would go undetected—one atrocity being covered by another still more atrocious.

Our hero shouted with all his might, but no response being heard, for awhile it seemed that he must perish here, and that this would end his fears, his toils, his aspirations. Already the place was densely filled with the suffocating vapor, which, rolling upward toward the roof, again fell toward the ground in huge columns, lurid with flame. All the wall was aglare, and the heat fast becoming intolerable. The felon had contrived his work, in order that the whole interior of the edifice might be consumed before the fire was discovered. Even the flames themselves, as in the dead atmosphere of the place they licked the costly frescoes and swung over to the plundered sacristy, seemed instinct with caution lest they might be exposed ere the seal was set to their triumph.

"O, blessed Mary, save me!"

That agonized prayer would have been the victim's last,

but the Immaculate Mother heard and answered. Surely it was no impiety when he seized the dismembered trunk of the statue, dashed it against the door with such force as broke the hinges, opening for him a passage from his sepulchre of fire.

The fire had been discovered through the windows—an alarm sounded—and the nucleus of a vast, excited throng already surrounded the sacred edifice. With these Neil mingled, unquestioned, unnoticed; and rallying speedily from his state of suffocation, joined with the foremost in gigantic efforts for subduing the flames.

They were successful; and at the end of an hour the scathed structure, like a wounded thing yet tenacious of life, had been plucked clear of the jaws of the devouring monster.

As quiet returned, Neil, standing exhausted and as he supposed unknown, received the secret sign, and started with delight, like a bridegroom on whose ear breaks the chime of his marriage bells. It was Father Dunlea who had given the mystic touch.

"Thou brave," whispered the priest, "well I understood at seeing you swaying in air from the summit of a ladder that looked but the tattered remnant of a spider's web, what was the motive inspired you, and that you were remembering what was *below* e'en more than what was *above*. Erin Ullaloo—and so good night—or rather morning."

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## CHAPTER X.

"There's a light in the window for thee, brother,  
A light in the window for thee."

ON the following day the report spread wildly that the Church of St. — had been not only fired but robbed of plate to the value of more than a thousand pounds.

"And scanty a three years till Christmas is it," said one and another, "since the same was repated. By my sowl and St. Patrick, but it's a bowld Irishman's abroad, anyhow."

Neil was informed, however, that it was by most believed the plunder had been effected during the excitement of the fire, which had been set with that intent. He kept his own

counsel, believing that what was past was past and portended no danger to the future; and being far from seeking the notoriety, either with the Brotherhood or the public, which would come of divulging the tale of that night's marvellous experiences.

Nor did he remain longer in Dublin at that time. In Cork, in Belfast, and in all the cities and principal towns throughout the country, he was secretly sowing the seeds of a rich and mighty harvest to be gathered in at the pleasure of Him who "rewardeth openly." Everywhere he found the soil ready for the reception of the seed, with Pauls to plant, and Apolloses to water. Men of every rank rushed with bared arm to redeem the land from her oppressors—to the rescue of their sacred rights from beneath the iron heel of tyranny.

That done—the first great triumph gained—the peasant boy one day quietly re-entered his native village, to be again for a little time the Neil O'Connor of his former life. Not that either—nor could he if he would, nor would he if he could; but at least, though changed in all else, he carried the same warm heart in his bosom, and never had the innocent rustic sports of his former life been so dear, as amid the stern realities which attended his new career.

It had been given out that he had gone to Dublin in search of employment. Some said the measure was of Rose Brod-rick's enforcing, who had distinctly told him he must turn over a new leaf or never arrive at the picture of wedded happiness with her. Others again, not quite so far from the truth, hinted at his father's embarrassments as being the occasion of Neil's reformatory resolutions—the latter class agreeing that he "was iver a broth of a boy, and fit to be the son of a lord any day in the year."

It was deep twilight when Neil approached and pulled the string of the cabin door. Even before he raised his hand, a wild chorus of dogs within announced his coming to Kathie, who at the moment sat thinking of her brother with tearful eyes. She bounded to open the door, and though of one mind as they were, each hindered the other so much that it required two full minutes of pushing and pulling to accomplish the purpose.

"Arrah, one could almost as well afford to be a juke or ither nabob, as isn't able to admit hisself to the castle that's his own's, till the footman and the head porter and all the servants

of the hall ginerally, does it for his honor's honor—and that's a truth to be sworn to by all the books as iver was opened and shut."

"O Neil—Neil!"

"O Kathie darlint!"

"Hush the dogs, Neil, for the love of heaven. One can't by no means hear his own mouth spake. Och, murther! here it is Rookh what has broke himself from his chain, and would all the same was it too sthrong for a horse, that's held the baste snug-like for a matter of weeks too."

The great St. Bernard was at his master's face in an instant; and he and Kathie cutting short their embrace, the former flung himself along the floor, for the present at the mercy of his canine friends, while his sister stood by, laughing and crying, and declaring he would be "kilt intirely."

Having gorged their appetites by devouring him over and over, lapping out of his throat the fond endearing names they had missed so long by way of sweetening the meal that needed no sweetening, Rookh and Eric gradually settled into a calmer behaviour, and lay down by his side together; each, however, in turn, constantly pushing between his brother brute and the master, for the love they bore him and the honor that was due his coming home.

So there lay the boy patriot, whose untutored eloquence had lately fired the heart of thousands, stretched upon his back along the cottage floor, his hands clasped beneath his head, his feet to the smouldering turf-fire; while on the left the two dogs disputed the place of honor, and on the right Kathie had dropped down like a lark to her nest in the meadow grass.

"Troth," she cried, "it is what I expect you have come to attind the wake."

"Whose wake sure?"

"Ah then, it's nobody ilse's but ould Molly M'Guire's, the poor cratur that the roof was sowld over her head this day fortnight for the rint, and his lordship's agent sayin' to this, and to that, and iverybody into the bargain, that it's the example he'd be makin' of her, and the poor body kilt all over wid the rheumatism at the time, which was a shame to see, and you know it was thrue of her forenent the time of yer lavin' for Dooblin, only it's in my thought to swear to your bein' away foriver jist, and Mистер Kenson the agent, as you

mind as well's mesilf, barrin' the sthrangeness of yer bein' back and wasn't all along—Misther Kenson he tould her a long sthory out of face, about it bein' his lordship as had sent up from London, for he's gone down, long life to him if he stays; for the matter of a hundred pounds, to be had could it or not, which is a great sin and a shame if he did, and I needn't be botherin' to say what iverybody knows, and he tould Molly M'Guire she'd be takin' hersilf from there in a hurry, and she with neither chair nor table but the sthraw of her bed to lie on, and she ax'd him civilly back, whether if she lived till she died in the cabin, she would be actin' greatly agin conscience and agin his honor's favor, did she stay to be waked pleasant like undher the thatch as had laked a river on her as often as iver there was rain, and the agent—ill luck to him for the baste of a man that he is—he answered her niver a word, good or bad, but turned his face and went away, and sint the bailiff directly he could find him, with a writ of ejectment, and whin they lifted Molly by her shoulders and the two feet of her, to take her up from her bed—and it is what her niece tould me with her own mouth that's all the way from O'Shaughlin's town to be carin' for her from charity, with puttin' on airs and a shawl on her back as she vows cost a guinea and niver a penny less, but I reckon on the thing niver cost half the money and the half not paid for—and she says it was her aunt as put back the arm she hasn't moved for a year, quick-like, and snatched out of the sthraw a handkerchief and something in it as made a jingle, which it was his honor, the bailiff, didn't hear it at all, bekase he was by good luck lookin' t'other way, and Molly hid the handkerchief in her own bosom, as was sinsible in one so long ailin', till they'd carried her to the nixt neighbor's that's Mrs. M'Remmis, as I needn't be tellin' you, that's sister to Mrs. O'Reilley, that's Hugh Flannerty's aunt, and sure do ye mind where he's gone these three weeks?—and it's the illegant sort of a wake they're to have, as is proper for one so well off sure, for Lord knows how many's the sovereigns in gowld she had laid by in the handkerchief, and niver none the wiser for it—so now, Neil, it's mesilf has tould ye the news and the story out of face.”

“Ah, but I'm thinkin' it's what I'd like to hear somethin' of yersilf now, to be sure.”

“Would ye so? Well, his lordship was called to London,

as I said—betther luck it couldn't be!—by the death of his shister and she not expected by nobody to live till his lordship could get there, and that's the last as has been heard from him, good or bad, or will I'm hopin', and the saison what it is, forenent the spring anyway, savin' it's what his lordship sint for the hundred pounds, you are sensible, and it might be for buryin' his shister, as mayn't have the ability to bury hersilf, for I seen a nursery maid as has know'd his lordship's family all their lives, by way of what her own mither has tould her, and she said what it is the truth by all accounts, that his lordship himself wasn't born to the matter of a penny a year savin' his wife's fortune that's dead, and that releases me while iver his lordship's away, which I trust wont be short; but I was scairt all over whin it came out that his lordship was in want o' monéy, for I ax'd mesilf would Misther Kenson be comin' to father, and it was wishin' to my sowl he'd be doin' the same, bekase then I'd make sure his lordship had give up the thought of takin' a wife for the rint."

"Maybe then it's no rint is due no longer, savin' what's paid," suggested the brother, very quietly.

"O that can't be," she replied, "for how should it? But is it goin' to the wake we are?"

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE WAKE.

"D'YE mind the day as oursilves was last here, whin we wint to the dance that night, and you asfear'd I'd not be comin' did I mind it was a dance, and the hour what it was?" And Kathie dashed away from her brother's side to throw an eye, as she said, around the shadowy side of Murderer's Rock, as if dreaming some of her friends might be lying in wait there, as on the occasion referred to.

To-night, however, all the neighborhood for many a mile was centering at the wake. The report of the sovereigns concealed in the straw of her bed, had won for poor old Molly a host of friends.

"And do ye mind how it was his reverence as danced with us till break o' day?" rattled on sweet Kathie. "It is what

he had been, or was goin', to shrieve Molly M'Guire that blissed night, and hersilf only dead the day. Sure we'll all be at the wake of it? It's what his riverence will be plazed to see ye, and he himself was away the while."

"Was he so?" returned her brother. "And it's mesilf will be plazed to see his riverence, which is what's more befitting intirely. (And sure now, what would Kathie darlint be thinkin' did she mind this minute what's in the two hearts of us—the priest's and me own's!")

When Neil and his sister arrived, the wake had opened with power. The crying sounded uncommonly fine, everybody seeming in excellent voice and doing their best; while the night, clear, calm and frosty, was just the medium for echoing the choruses far and wide.

They found the house twice filled already, first with men and women, and secondly with the smoke of their pipes; and still by far the greater number of those present were standing without,—among whom Neil and Kathie took up a position; which, being just before the door, was the most favorable for seeing as well as hearing. Young O'Connor's friends thronged about him, with shaking of hands and the compliments of the day.

"It's good luck to see ye home again the night," said one, "sich is the illegant time we'll be havin'. Sure it would go hard with me but I'd be at it, was it mileses and mileses away. It's the night's as good as Molly hersil' could have got made to ordher; and it's the best of my judgment and belief, we'll be heard disthintly as fur as Carrickoshaw, and funder. Will ye be givin' out some pipes and terbacker here!"

The last sentence was shouted in at the door.

"You niver seen the likes for wailin'," said another exultingly, "of the Munster woman as happens to be prisent, under heaven. You'll not be long waitin' to hear for yersil'. Every one would wish and be proud to have such at his funeral."

Neil espied his father among the crowd, as Kathie had led him to expect; he seemed to be looking care-worn and unhappy, even in so gay a place as a wake. The son saw abstractedly, and just hearing the remark—

"Many and many's the fine word they're sayin' which it must be pleasant for the deceased to be hearin' about hersil'

—chafely about them sovereigns to be sure, as his lordship—ill luck to him! would like to be takin' from the poor cratur, through his lordship's agent and the bailiff—not the dacent kind of a man is ayther."

His lordship in the course of the night, came in for a bountiful share of anathemas, as did also Kenson the agent, both being about equally hated, and the latter hardly the less feared.

"Our—ow—ah—agh!"

Those without, startled by the sudden howl, turned and looked up and down the road. An old woman, quite by herself, approached as near as practicable for the condensed multitude, and continued her exclamations, swaying her body about, with wringing of hands and the most horrible contortion of features.

"Isn't she illegant now?" cried many admirers.

"Who is the craytur at all?" asked others.

Suddenly the woman ceased, and standing on tiptoe in the endeavor to see over the heads blocking up the passage to the door, inquired:

"Arrah! who is it that's dead?—who is it we're crying for?"

"Sure it's one Molly M'Guire," answered a dozen voices at once.

"Is it so!" returned the other. "Thin I hope she'll not be jealous, but I heard niver a sentence till as I was passin', and it's a sthranger I am from tin miles up the counthry sure. But it's mesilf seen the body oncet on a time, that was yearses ago, and I'd not a doubt she was in heaven since."

"May be thin," rejoined the eager crowd, "ye'd be plazed to hear about the heap o' sovereigns she was afther lavin' to the niece as come to attind her duty, when it was what every one supposed that she owned niver a thing in the world, savin' her body and sowl at all at all."

Three or four of those standing nearest proceeded in a chorus of high-pitched voices to give the story in all its details—or, as their expression would have been—"out of face."

The other listened with gratifying interest, till almost at the close she interrupted vociferously:

"Botheration!—don't any of yez be makin' a fool o' yersilf! The money ye spake of is no more nor less as a few pence and

shillin's, and I wont say pounds, what I seen Molly with me own eyes a beggin up and down for her funeral. It's all very well, to be sure, but the money's no sich amount as ye min-tion, and I'd say the same before his honor on me oath—wouldn't I now!"

"Thin it's all along of her niece that's desaved us," replied the story-tellers, crestfallen and indignant. "It's the manest kind of doin's anyway, and who knows, afther all, will there be plinty of terbarcker, and she puttin' on her airs?"

The effect of this piece of intelligence was dampening in the extreme; the sentiment being general, that Molly had gotten up a good time for herself under false pretences. With the younger portion of the company, however, the niece who had been putting on airs before them, was the person to blame, and she was accordingly berated in no gentle words; nor could she ever have it to say of that night, that she had been slandered behind her back on all the throng. In several quarters mutterings for vengeance arose.

"I'd ax ye would ye be showin' yersil' now!" shouted a voice, calling the young woman by name; and through some inadvertency at about the same time, a pebble the size of a man's fist, came smashing through the little window of four panes, and hitting a man in the leg, occasioned his crying out that he was "kilt, kilt, kilt!"—in imitation, probably, of that time-honored phrase in the sentence for capital offences—"hung by the neck till you are dead, dead, dead!"—but in the present case, nobody's soul was recommended to mercy.

"See what's it ye's done now!" exclaimed a single daring individual, striking hands against the multitude in accusation of the informer, as with impressive gestures he closely followed her up, the former forcing her tardy progress through the throng outside, bent upon getting a look at the corpse at all hazards. "It's all one as if ye'd brought down a hearty shower o' rain on the peoples at a fair. Home wid ye, ye ould hypocrite—it's none o' *your* wake at all at all—begone for safety, and let dacent men and womens hereabouts be enjoyin' theysil's—can't ye now!"

As to the woman herself, bareheaded, with dark, unkempt hair and fierce-looking eyes, she may have begrudged the ullaloo she had lavished on one so unworthy, and have devoutly wished to demand her contribution back, and hold the same in

reserve till her own country people, some fine night, should get up a wake of their own.

"Pity it is now!" remarked one, gazing after her, "since her whillaluh, wasn't it right illegant althegither—whosom-iver she is or isn't—and may she have the same at her own wake, anyhow."

"Don't not let us be sp'ilin' matthers, and the illegant crowd this is, as 'most iver I seen," added one with the white-haired crown of experience on her head—"anyway, the likes hasn't been at no woman's wake in tin yeareses, savin' at the funeral of his honor, where happy was the man could get a sight at the hearse."

The scale was turned—or at least inclining to turn—in favor of making the most of a good opportunity, trifles to the contrary notwithstanding. An earnest effort which was made to renew the wailing, met with considerable success.

"Wouldn't we jist be afther runnin' over beyant the frozen bog and see how fine it sounds," said a friend to Neil.

No sooner proposed than agreed to; and away went the O'Connor—Brodrick—Ratigan—Flannerty clique of former time, intent on a criticism of the *allaloo* as heard from a distance.

"O, but I'm wonderin' where's the fun," murmured Rose Brodrick, with a disconsolate sigh, about five minutes after Neil had left her side. "It's the sthupidest place iver I hope to be at—is a wake."

Kathie was suddenly of the same opinion.

"Let's we be goin' by oursilves round the pin't o' the rocks and thry the echo," was her suggestion for relieving the dullness till their lovers' return; and the two, hand in hand, stole quietly away, and soon, under the calm moonlight, were at the locality of the wonderful echo.

"Does it repate twice, it manes yes—does it more, it manes no. You'll be first to ax it a question—come now."

It was Kathie whom her friend thus preferred, and who was thus permitted to consult the rural sylph, without money and without price. She stood up on an altar of rock. She drew her breath—then her courage failed her.

"You'll niver be tellin'," she exclaimed—"niver, Rose, will you?"

"Niver, as throe as I live, or hope to be saved," was the solemn asseveration. "But, and I'm to take my turn at the

same thing prisently, Kathie dear—so we'll be aven, for that matther."

"Well, and I'll not tell no sowl alive what may be your question."

"No, I'm sure you wouldn't at all."

Kathie drew herself up the second time.

"Will I"—falteringly—"will I be married?"

"Loudher!" cried her friend—"no sick childer of an echo wouldn't be wakened by puttin' a question in that kay. Spake up now, its only mesilf and the echo to hear anyway—but the question's no question to be axin' at all at all."

"How can ye say that, Rose? I'd like to know isn't it the question as every girl is afther axin' the echo that's in her heart sure?"

"Thrue for ye," laughed the other, "and howsiver aisy she's axin', *that* echo al'ays spakes up wid the answer—'Yes, darlint, to be sure.' But for yersilf to be axin' the question here—it's all one as to ax was ye born of a mither—or was ye to die. Say ye put it this way—'Will I marry ——' here ye spake the gintleman's name, ye know. As this now—'Will I marry Condycarrigankillybogah?'"

Both laughed, and the proof came to their ears that Echo was out of her couch, and waiting to be gracious—or otherwise.

"But niver could I do it," protested Kathie—"to be spakin' a real name that way, no indade."

"Why not, sure; and none but oursil's to know it iver?" Then Glyn Brodrick's sister added, naively—"Ye mought be thryin' with his lordship's name, can't ye find a betther?"

"I can find a betther thin—so I can," returned Kathie, and drawing up her little figure for the final issue, she put the question right bravely:

"Misthress Echo, will I marry—*Glyn Brodrick*?"

"Faith, and upon my conscience"—a wonderful echo, truly!

The fair devotees at her shrine recognized a familiar human voice. Alas! for poor timid little Kathie. She shrieked, and the genuine echo inhabiting there flew around and around her, like a mother oriole around the nest in danger of being plundered.

Down a rocky cleft a loose stone came rolling, and tumbling after, four stalwart young fellows; never more wildy has

lovelorn maiden flung herself over a precipice to meet her doom, than did Kathie dash herself off that altar, where, according to her overwhelming thought, her virgin delicacy was laid, a bleeding sacrifice;—but only to be caught in the smothering arms of Glyn, who must have been, at the least, a good deal bewildered, himself—for, instead of whispering it to her ear, he joined his lips fast to hers, while he finished the sentence:

“Faith, and upon my conscience, and by the howliest sain alive I shwear it—it’ll be no fault of mine if ye don’t do the same—nor wont I iver be sthirrin’ from the place, be it dead or alive, till you promise forenent these witnesses.”

Kathie was crying heartily at the moment—partly from vexation with Rose, whose untimely mirth led her to think—though quite unjustly, as she knew afterwards—that she had purposely betrayed her into this dreadful dilemma. The simple fact was, that “the boys” had observed their departure, and guessing their destination, had made a circuit to meet them—some small mischief in their thoughts, may be, though not at all foreseeing the events then and there to have place in that night’s travesty.

By what word or sign Kathie responded to her lover’s importunate declaration, I do not know, nor yet did those present; but the latter almost immediately appeared comforted, and even amazingly satisfied.

Nor was the love-making confined to Glyn Brodrick; Neil O’Connor went down on his knees to Rose on the frosty turf, and Rose suddenly hushed her gleeful laughter to listen to words uttered for her alone; afterwards he set her upon her feet, and she blushing under the moon, and called her his darlint, his bride and his wife; and plainly enough he cared not a tester who heard. As for the two supernumeraries of the stage—Flannery and Ratigan—they behaved better than might have been expected; and both promised as soon as asked, they’d tell not a word of what had passed, on their oath.

“But not to be goin’ without makin’ our best compliments to the echo,” cried the two last, in a breath, “ye must be givin’ us a song, Neil.”

“Must I, thin?”

“Yes—yes,” answered all. Even Rose breathed “yes,” and

he thought the little monosyllable the sweetest sound he had ever heard.

Neil was a fine natural singer, and not strongly opposed to hearing the music of his own voice at every proper occasion. The song he chose to-night was:

### KITTY NEIL.

"Ah, sweet Kitty Neil! rise up from your wheel;  
Your neat little foot will be weary from spinning;  
Come trip down with me to the sycamore tree—  
Half the parish is there, and the dance is beginning.  
The sun is gone down, but the full harvest moon  
Shines sweetly and sad on the dew-whitened valley,  
While all the air rings with the soft loving things  
Each little bird sings in the green shaded alley."

With a blush and a smile, Kitty rose up the while,  
Her eye in the glass, as she bound her hair, glancing,  
'Tis hard to refuse when a young lover sues,  
So she couldn't but choose to—go off to the dancing.  
And now on the green the glad groups are seen,  
Each gay-hearted lad with the lass of his choosing;  
And Pat, without fail, leads out Kitty Neil—  
Somehow, when he asked, she ne'er thought of refusing.

Now Felix Magee puts his pipe to his knee,  
And, with flourish so free, sets each couple in motion;  
With a cheer and a bound, the lads patter the ground—  
The maids move around just like swans on the ocean.  
Cheeks bright as the rose—feet light as the doe's—  
Now coyly retiring, now boldly advancing;  
Search the world all round, from the sky to the ground,  
No such sight can be found as an Irish lass dancing!

Sweet Kate! who could view your bright eyes of deep blue  
Beaming humidly through their dark lashes so mildly—  
Your fair turned arm, heaving breast, rounded form—  
Nor feel his heart warm, and his pulses throb wildly?  
Poor Pat feels his heart, as he gazes, depart,  
Subdued by the smart of such painful yet sweet love;  
The sight leaves his eye, as he cries, with a sigh—  
"Dance light, for my heart it lies under your feet, love."

"Ye're bringing out the whole wake sure, and raison enough." Then they all ran with their might, and merrily turned back the tide, presently arriving at the door, their former position.

Here the elder O'Connor, having learned that his son was present, pressed his way out to him with affectionate greeting.

"I can't but spake my word in favor of his riverence," he privately remarked. "His aqual I niver seen at any wake; and sure I'll niver be thinkin' again that a wake's a wake without Father Dunlea."

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE HOUSE IN THE ALLEY.

"TROTH thin, may be it's the dacent place, as ye say, for the likes o' poor folk as we be, yet ye'll all the better be kapin' yersil' and childer in the sthrate—so ye will. Be set by me, and don't ye not be movin' in here at all at all."

"Will ye be givin' the raison, thin?—I ax ye agin, Mrs. McCroghan, will ye be givin' the raison for beratin' the house as ye lives in yersil' yare in and yare out—I take yer own word for the same, and it's not nobody ilse's word but yer own's. Maybe now ye's one o' them womens, and I reckons you be, what's mane and silfish-like inthirely, so ye wants a whole room or a house all to yer own's wid nobody nigh-hand, this way or t'other. Maybe it's the whiskey jug as sees the bot-tom of itself too soon, and no pace to be had wid ye in the neighborhood—sure it's not afraid to be spakin' out to yer face I am. Or maybees it's what you expect the childer will be makin' a noise in the intry, or yet in the alley outside—than which two lambs niver was aisier; and if I say it that's their mither, it's no lie."

Let it not be supposed that Mrs. McCroghan heard all this in silence, while she waited her turn to speak. True, she did not interrupt, for the sufficient reason that the other was too well-bred to be put down; she merely remarked quietly, at the top of her voice, that this person coveting to become her neighbor in some one of the long-vacant apartments of the house, above and below, was himself chargeable with all she had charged on another—that she was a liar, and a thief, and no honest woman, besides being drunk at that very moment, and the bonnet on her head not her own.

"It's dhrunk as a baste ye are, and I can prove it by the

man that seen you yistherdy—Lord knows who or what ye bez anyway—it's mesil' as niver set my eyes on ye till the day, and, faith, may I niver do it again, or wouldn't I like to be kickin' ye out."

These were the compliments exchanged simultaneously, and were well calculated to promote an acquaintance between the two prospective neighbors.

"Dhrunk'is it!" softly shouted the stranger lady, taking a step beyond the threshold into the other's domains, her eyes gentle as a springing panther's, and her right hand clenched as if it held a crown diamond which she was fearful of losing.

At this, Mrs. McCroghan faced her visitor with a lifted stool—"which if she meant for the other to sit down upon the same, it was a very *high* compliment she paid her, sure."

Then one or the other, I am not certain which, said—"Arrah now, be aisy"—or important words to that effect; to which the other, whichever that refers to, responded something like—"No harrum or offince—I'm hopin'." Whereupon the hospitable Mrs. McCroghan went at once to a corner of the room, and drew from beneath a heap of old bedding a black jug, having apparently something in it besides the cork, with a space between, and Mrs. McCroghan and the other fair daughter of Eve sat down together upon the old bedquilt and so forth, and talked the matter over in mutual confidence and sincerity, as civil people should.

"Sure I don't mind tellin' ye, though it's not mesil' as would be takin' away the rint out of the hand of as dacent a landlord as iver breathed his last at Christmas a twelvemonth—heaven be his bed!—and his son that's after him, I niver yet seen barrin' whin he comes for the rint, which is what me mither pays him hersil' in Cork, but that's no raison for the sthrange goin's on in this house I'm in, or in the corner of the same as kapes nixt the brewery, and wasn't it for me prayer-book, and if ye're able to tell me is it a prayer-book or not, I'll be 'bleeged to yez—bekase it's one I tuk from little Bid-dy McMulligan, whose mither lives in the alley, and my conscience was agin the young drab usin' it in the slush and mud that way, for a sin and a shame—and weren't it by me here, I'd be lavin' in a hurry and not darin' to shtop the night—so I wouldn't."

"Is it ghosts, now?"

Mrs. McCroghan nodded assent nearly to the floor, where lay the black jug, uncorked, with a stream of nothing running out of it; but she rallied again, rather than miss the chance of relating a story of the marvellous, and proceeded:

"It's the smaller sort of man as rints the room—"

"And he the imp hissill!—ah—h! Faix now, I'll be tellin' ye the illegant tale of a goblin, as iver ye heard wid your two eyes!—is that dark-colored cat yer own's now?—how she's openin' her mouth and purrin', God bless her! wid scarce the length of a leg to her body."

Here the morning caller gave the overturned black jug a little kick, which set it rolling away in a curve till it brought up against the water bucket in the middle of the room. She stared vacantly after it, rubbed her eyes to improve her vision, then apparently disgusted with so eccentric an animal, returned to her story.

"As illegant a tale inthirely as iver made yer hair crape up and down. Me own mither's uncle it was, as thravelled to Wales—"

"O boo!—it's not yersilf now as was spakin' at all—bad manners to ye! You'd be changin' the childer in their chradles, wid puttin' yer boshy ould sthory for one that's all nate and new that's me own's. Be aisy now."

"Will ye be long at it?—bekase I left me little childer that's not scalt and killed like t'other, locked in along with a toob and plinty of hot wather—"

"Saints above, hear that now! Isn't it the ungrateful craythur she is, afther tastin' the las' dhrop o' me whiskey! I'll be done thin in less than a breath. And now be listenin' wid yer two ears."

"About this day, three years, to be sure, the man I spake of—sorrow take him!—kilt and murdered his own wife in that very room, who was moved into it wid her husband only a wake or two, and seemed all scairted-like and not darin' to be lavin' at all, be the man himsil' in or out, but jist stayin' by to attind his duty, and him as surly-timpered as iver you seen; and I'd swear to seein' him take in a goodly-size coffin all alone by hissill', barrin' anither to help him on wid it; and the man as was t'other and not hissill' at all, tuggin' up the sharp stairs in a priest's robe on him, which is the raison I wouldn't be spakin' of the same to this or that, first nor last."

“ Well, there was goin’s on, and I quiverin’ from head to fut, wid the quilt over me face where I’d gone into my bed as wake as wather, for I’d along been too afeared of the man to ax him civil good-mornin’, nor iver since did I or did any one—and whose-iver lived in the house, soon picked up their joog and bed and stool, maybees, and left it, for the suspicionment they’d took up in one way and another, and me vinturin’ niver a word more than that I’d be mysil’ the first to go and last to come back, barrin’ it was my mither as paid the rint, and I not the ability to do as much for mysil’ and the whiskey what it is for price; and nobody as knows the matter, but would cut the right hand off their body sooner as they’d be goin’ towards the door o’ that room, but we all hearn a gol and a lament many’s the time. ”

“ Well, thin, it’s no long while ago, all of a avenin’, I was chancin’ to look out o’ me door by raison of a noise to be hearn in the intry there, about bedtime was the hour, I mind, seein’s I’d niver a candhle, no more a bit o’ turf, and the sight I seen was nothin’ airthly, be sure. She glid out o’ that very room, as plain as could be, wid her hand as white as the dead’s, by the light from the brewery through the windy, put forenent hersil’, and the fingers movin’ up and down, like playin’ slow music, and niver turnin’ to the right nor yet to the left, but all one as the dead might do, hersil’ glid down the stairs, and jist on the last o’ them, she vanished nowhere, and I seen it wid my own eyes, as wouldn’t be tellin’ a lie and nothin’ for it, and the person wasn’t the man’s wife that was, at all at all, barrin’ they’ve put it on her in heaven a Sister of Charity’s gown and hood—so now it’s what I’ve tould ye the sthory out of face.”

How decidedly Mrs. M’Croghan’s relation weighed against the interests of her landlord as regards the applicant of that morning, cannot with certainty be recorded; but the same evening brought with it a sequel to her tale of mystery, not quite so mysterious to the reader.

It was Dark Margaret and Father Dunlea, who noiselessly ascended the stairs and passed into the haunted chamber.

A candle which the former had brought with her being lighted, the priest looked about him, and first proceeded to carefully secure the door against possible intrusion.

There, still, lay Agnes upon her dismal couch; her large eyes turned on the priest, followed wherever he went, with

the extreme earnestness of hope almost outweighed by despair.

The chamber appeared quite bare of furniture, with the exception of a stool and a rude table; the former Sister Margaret placed for his reverence, while herself was half kneeling, half crouching, at the head of the suffering victim of cruelty and wrong.

After a brief conversation which merely repeated from Agnes's lips what he had before learned through his companion, the priest arose solemnly, and with hands outstretched above that emaciated form, absolved her from the unholy vow which had been forced upon her three long years before.

Agnes could scarce believe that at last her soul was emancipated from its thralldom; during many months she had constantly looked for death, and had hailed the grim messenger as her only deliverer. It was several minutes ere her feelings would permit her to speak; but having relieved them by abundance of tears, she warmly thanked both his reverence and Dark Margaret, and then gave them her surprising narrative.

Three years before, her husband, had found means to rob the Church of St. — of all its gold and silver plate and ornaments. Under cover of night he brought his sad booty to their one chamber, boldly avowing all to his wife, and likewise declaring his intention of making similar attempts in other directions, and of finally emigrating to America, when he should have made himself rich enough.

Mrs. M'Morny, shocked at her husband's proceedings, first expostulated, and next threatened him with exposure; and in that hour he laid a plot for the greater security of his plunder, and the gratification of his revenge at the same time.

He stripped the little room of every article which could be sold, carrying them out one by one, and in return brought back a coffin, telling his wife it was for herself both while she lived and after her death, and that he had been pains-taking in selecting the proper size.

One who pretended to hold the office of a priest accompanied Terence on that night, and stood by, muttering prayers in an unknown tongue, while the other made the coffin they had brought in the depository of his new riches, afterwards

deliberately preparing a bed upon it and compelling his wife to lie down there.

The woman, feeling stunned and helpless, could only obey. The priest, whose genuineness she never thought of doubting—albeit, wondering in her heart how a good man could connive at such iniquity, then stepped forward and put her under the most solemn vow never to rise from that bed without her husband's consent, and never to betray his secret to living mortal.

The priest then went from the house, and Terence standing over his wife with a deadly weapon, swore by a terrible oath, that he would kill her, if ever she made known to any one that she was still in the land of the living.

At different times he had added to his deposit—the last of these occasions being only a short time previous. Of late she had been undergoing the pangs of starvation at the hands of this monster; and had revealed her situation to Dark Margaret as a dying woman.

In horror and amazement they removed the invalid and examined the coffin, finding there all the evidence of her veracity. Father Dunlea had been the more intensely interested, from recognizing in Terence M'Morny the probable robber of the Church of St. — for the second time; and upon close scrutiny of the ruined plate, inscriptions were found which proved the fact beyond a doubt.

The same hour, the wretched sufferer was carried out of the house and conveyed to a hospital, where she three days afterwards expired. Though the removal had been as secret as possible, yet by that means or some other, the guilty party took the alarm—at least, he kept away from the place, and accordingly the measures devised to entrap him failed. The only thing to be done, was to recover the treasure and wait in hope for the detection of the criminal.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## ACTING UNDER ORDERS.

BRIEF was the interval ere our hero prepared to put off Neil O'Connor the boy, and put on again Neil O'Connor the "Man of Men." He knew that in every county of his own Emerald Isle eager masses awaited his coming; yet while thanking God for his mission with a burning spirit and in unfaltering trust, he shed some not unpardonable tears, at parting, perhaps forever, from the scenes of the careless, happy past, to enter and contest for the prize in the arena of the future.

He had slept once more under the dear home-roof, had wandered over the downs, leaped ditches, and wished beside fairy mounts, and chatted with all the people of his neighborhood—better than these, he had won from the girl of his heart the sweetest of confessions—better—sweet—even though prudence half reproached him for the deed, whispering it would have been more honorable to have left Rose free, in view of the difficulties and uncertainties before him—and now he must away to other duties and sterner realities.

Nor had he been quite idle here. His father had been first to be informed of his deeds and their results hitherto; and next, cautiously but thoroughly, the new leaven was mingled with the mass of loyal hearts, where it quickly began its work. The elder O'Connor, though startled and somewhat timid, gave his son his blessing and godspeed; while the people, with ready mind, drank in his inspiration, and binding their fate to his, yearned hotly for the coming struggle.

Dear, guileless Kathie, who suspected nothing of all this, and could not understand why her brother must leave them, cried herself sick over the prospect; nor much easier did the young master find his task of tearing himself from the two affectionate brutes, Eric and Rookh. His sister bidding him good-by over and over, still clung to his neck; while the dogs—the more determined, perhaps, through her co-operation,

finally planted themselves against the door, as a last resort, determined to make him a prisoner at home.

Neil was forced to tie them in their corner at length; but at this they set up a howl, enough to distract the whole neighborhood.

"O troth, it's very unkind of ye now," exclaimed the young master, brushing a tear from his eye, and folding his arms, he stood glancing from Kathie to the dogs, quite despairingly. "I'll niver be makin' ye ashamed of Neil O'Connor, though it's agin my goin' ye are. Maybe it's mesilf best knows what's needin' to be done; and could I take along all my heart is aching for here, the sacrifice would be but half complete. Let me be gone thin—be aisy, and we'll be comin' together in better whiles—trust and belave me, can't ye?"

For a moment there was quiet; Kathie seemed convinced, and sat down, only sobbing just audibly, her face hidden in a coquettish little white apron. But no sooner did Neil venture to lift the latch, than the dogs set up a wilder screeching than before. He caught a handkerchief from his pocket, and throwing it on the ground beneath the sharp nose of the faithful Rookh, bade the animal watch it till his return, then rushed from the cabin. The last glimpse he had within was of Kathie flinging herself down beside Rookh and clasping his neck, that they might cry in sympathy.

Neil had conversed with his father in greater confidence than had existed between them previously, concerning Lord Lismore and his proposals for the hand of Kathie. As his sister had already informed him, the nobleman was absent for the present in London, where he had been summoned without any premonition, by one of those events which intrude themselves, unabashed, even on the notice of lords and kings, to interrupt or destroy their pursuits, their desires and their delights. Bryson O'Connor, unlike his innocent, sanguine daughter, was in hourly expectation of his lordship's return, and dread of what would follow—"barrin'," he added doubtfully, "it's what could be contrived to pay off the debt."

"And paid it'll be directly," was Neil's response—"for it's mesilf will be sendin' the money, so look out for the same by the ind o' the wake, as I live."

This conversation occurred on the morning of Neil's second departure, as he accompanied his father a couple of miles toward the next town, where some business called him. His

son's promise was a relief to Bryson O'Connor, who went on his way with a lighter heart; at the same time, had Kathie herself been favorable to the proposed union, such a consummation would have not a little gratified the father's ambition. To tell the truth he had always hoped Kathie would finally marry his lordship—it would be something so grand and amazing; but he did not want to be reduced to the necessity of selling her to him for a few paltry pounds.

When Neil had bidden good-by and was on his way to meet the stagecoach at the high road, his mind reverted to the subject; and the probability that his lordship might return at any moment and press matters to a speedy issue disturbed him so much, that he resolved to see the demand upon which the threat was based, cancelled that same hour, using for the purpose money intrusted to him for the furtherance of the great cause in which he was engaged, and which he had the means of repaying so soon as he should reach Dublin.

Accordingly he turned aside, and having crossed a couple of stiles and a stubble field, found himself at the lodge occupied by Kenson, Lord Lismore's agent.

Passing up the gravel walk, he espied this person, through a French window, lolling in an easy chair, enjoying his pipe; but on looking out, he rose up quickly and disappeared, at the very moment the young man was congratulating himself that the agent would be able to attend to him at once and he would not be long detained. Upon inquiry for him, he was answered that "his honor had departed"—

"I'm quite prepared to belave that same," interrupted Neil, with a twinkle of the old sly humor in his eye—"indeed, what you mintion is but a truth well known up and down, throughout this neighborhood for years and years, but with yer lave I'll be seein' Misther Kenson as he is jist, barrin' the honor and all that."

The servant stared.

"Hi'd 'ave you hunderstand," he replied severely—"hif a Hirishman *can* hunderstand hanything hat hall—that 'is honor, the hagent, his haway."

"Thin ye may as well prepare to be resavin' back his dead body," said Neil O'Connor solemnly, "for as I came up I was seein' his ghost inside, rocking itsel' paceably and smokin' a pipe so natural, I'd be vowin' a strong smell of the same's in the room this blessed minute, if ye'll plaze open the door.

So I think I'll be waitin' to see the sight and attend the funeral."

So saying he very composedly sat down in the hall.

"You deserve to be kicked hout," cried the lackey, steaming with wrath.

"Och, and I'm very comfortable as I am, thank ye," returned the other, imperturbably. "It's a mysthery," he added, "what all this manes anyhow. I came to pay Misther Kenson some money, and I'd not be hinderin' him a quarther part of the time we're wastin' here together this minute—will ye plaze be sayin' the same to Misther Kenson himsel'?"

"You're a hinsolent Hirish blockit," retorted the other—"aven't hi hinformed you halready as 'ow 'is honor's hingaged!"

"Not the brith of it has passed yer lips till this," cried Neil, with lively interest. "Arrah, engaged is it! And one o' the dacent womens is she, niver a doubt, with the matther of tin thousand a year or less, maybe—for what leddy of all the land but wouldn't jump clare off her shoes for the chance of marryin' a man o' sich illegant looks, with his red hair the natest as iver was shown a comb, and his face all over dimpled as niver was any girrul's barrin' she's had the small-pox like himsel'. My compliments to ye for the news, and sure it's what we may expect our whiskey on rint-days again."

The servant had staggered back against the wall and stopped his ears. As Neil ceased, he swore an oath so hot it cannot be recorded for the danger of setting fire to the paper.

"What hin 'ell's going on 'ere hin the 'all!" politely inquired another *attache* of the lodge, blustering out.

"Hit's an 'anged hinsolent Hirish 'ind, as hinsists hon 'avin' a hinterview with 'is honor, though hi've hinformed 'im hover hand hover, has 'ow hit haint no use—'is honor bein' hout."

"I mind it was niver the fashion here at all till this, that no tenant was sint away with his money as should be paid for the rint, and that in arrear; and will ye be axin' yer master the favor to see me for only five seconds, till I can be tould the manin' of so sthrange a thing, it's mesil' will be obleged, sure."

The servant who last made his appearance, turned with a swell worthy of his nationality, and carried the message,

presently returning to conduct Neil at last into the august presence.

"Well, young man," said the agent the instant the other crossed the threshold, "what is the 'ighly important business you have come upon, hey?—let us know, if you please, without any of your infernally long Irish yarns."

"That's what I'll do, sir. It's to pay my father's rint, that happens to be behind—that's my business sure, nor one to be ashamed of, as I think."

"Your father owes no rent whatever—so there the matter ends, and you can depart."

"I wish it was true for ye, but if ye'll take the trouble to glance at the books"—

"Do you undertake to give information concerning my business?" vociferated the agent, clothed in terrible authority. "Who are you that presumes—"

"Arrah, I thought I was known to ye for Neil O'Connor, and Bryson O'Connor is my father."

"And who says you are not? If it was a question of identity, we might easily summon his lordship's gamekeeper. I tell you again—or if you will have it in plainer terms, we are *not ready for a settlement*. I am acting under express orders, and shall not receive a shilling at your hands, till his lordship's return."

"And when will that be, plaze ye?"

The other seemed to bethink himself an instant, before replying:

"In the spring."

"No sooner at all?"

"No."

"It's very well thin. Whiniver it is you are ready for the settlement you spake of, say nothing about it to my father, if ye plaze, but address me in Dublin—for to Dublin I'm startin' this hour, barrin' I'm too late to meet the coach—and I'll attend your duty at once. Till thin, Morgan Bird is a hundred times welcome to all he could swear against me before his honor, in conscience, honorably. Good-day."

## CHAPTER XIV.

## NO FENIAN.

"SOME of the records are missing."

"You cannot be mistaken?"

"Unfortunately, no."

"Can there be a traitor among us?"

It was Roger Dunlea who hissed the last question through his teeth. It was Neil O'Connor who replied with flashing eyes, though wordless lips. The two were standing upon the platform by themselves in the underground hall. The floor of the hall was crowded with members new and old—Fenians, whose name was now sounded abroad, to the wonder, not to say terror of nations. The existence of a vast and rapidly-spreading organization bearing that name, was no longer any secret, but their object was still a mystery, or at most but conjectured.

Neil, standing there by his friend's side, ran his quick eye over the assembled meeting, as if he would detect the traitor, if traitor were there. His blood boiled at the thought of seeing the enterprise so nobly begun, betrayed into the hands of its and Ireland's enemies. Who was the base-hearted wretch, and why did not the brand of Cain appear on his forehead?

"How was it with the records at the close of the last meeting?"

"All was then safe. Whatever is missed, must, I apprehend, have been taken this very hour."

"Then not a man goes from this place without thorough searching."

"It is our only way."

Everything seemed changed. Deep depression fell on the assembly, and each brother looked on his brethren with suspicion. All in turn gladly submitted to the search, but when the last had gone forth, the important papers had not been found.

Father Dunlea and young O'Connor alone remained in the hall. The latter had sat with face buried in his hands, petrified, as it were, by the calamity whose extent it was not possible at once to measure, the former meantime striding up and down, excitedly, with pale cheeks and eyes that glowed like fire.

"Would to heaven not a man had been allowed to go hence," exclaimed his reverence at length.

"And what then?" asked the other. "I know not what could have been done that has not been done; but one thing I know—if all is lost, it's myself would pray to die in this place to-night, and here to be buried. Your reverence," pursued Neil, "I have never told ye the story of a night's experience I had in this place—I allude to the night of the fire. It seemed altogether so incredible, my own reason was against it when daylight came; and but for the fact of the robbery, I could well have believed meself to have been dreaming."

"Let me hear your story then, afterward I will relate some strange developments that came to my knowledge connected with the robbery and the recovery of the plate, though in a damaged state."

"Indeed! And what of the robber?"

"He has not been arrested."

"Hist! What sound was that?"

"It came, I think, from the world above."

"Troth, I have known a similar come from the world below."

"How mean you?"

To this question Neil replied by inquiring:

"Are ye sure the church is now secure against burglars?"

"Almost like heaven itself, I should say. All the doors are furnished with the most impenetrable locks"—Father Dunlea stopped short, for his own ear seemed to catch an unnatural sound.

The conversation had been carried on in murmured tones, the priest having paused in his walk and seated himself beside Neil. A light burned dimly at the lower end of the hall, while the upper portion, marked by the ancient, mysterious wall, was shrouded in gloom. After a moment, in which perfect stillness reigned around, Neil made the whispered inquiry:

"Can you tell, is there a passage behind the wall?"

"A passage?" repeated his reverence, in surprise. "You speak like one having some knowledge on the point. There may be one, but if so, I am almost certain it is unknown to the generation now living."

"Some knowledge indeed is what I may say I have on the point, having once traversed such passage; though all efforts to find the place of entrance since that time have been fruitless. It now comes to my thought, could the entrance from the church above be availed of, the secret door out of this room might be discovered through the very means as at first—that is to say, by a light set in the passage, showing the aperture, where is placed, as would seem, a secret spring that controls the door."

"You astonish me. Can it be that thus we have a clue to the missing papers?"

"The saints forbid! And yet I would rather believe that none of our number could so basely betray our interests. The man discovered to be guilty of so vile an outrage against humanity should nevermore open his eyes to the light of day—no never! It was the best of my belief, that the thorough securing of the church against intrusion averted entirely all danger to ourselves, else would I have revealed my discovery."

As Neil uttered the last words, the same sound which each had before heard, or imagined, was repeated more distinctly. It was like the distant clashing of arms; and sitting in that deep underground apartment, at the dread midnight hour, amid all the certain and possible associations of the place, what wonder if a superstitious awe fell upon the two?

It would have been difficult to say from whence came the sound, yet as if by mutual consent, the eyes of the two solitary inmates of the hall were riveted upon the opposite end, where to the left of the platform, which that night, as on other nights, had resounded with the watchword of liberty, was situated the small apartment used as the depository of arms not needed in the nightly drill.

While they gazed, suddenly a white-robed figure appeared against the wall, like a statue in its niche—was seen for a moment, and then vanished as it came. Involuntarily the priest and his companion crossed themselves, then springing to their feet, cleared the length of the hall like lightning, and stood side by side, glancing from the blank old wall into

each other's face; neither sight nor sound was there to account for what had preceded.

Neil grasped a musket with fixed bayonet, putting another into the hands of the priest.

"Thou brave!" ejaculated the latter, "direct—I will obey. Be it man or goblin that here intrudes, he shall feel our vengeance."

With a firmness of mien that spoke more than any words could have done, the other took a step forward and drew open the door of the armory. It was half filled with munitions of warfare, which were all that at first appeared in the light of a lamp thrust within. There was a pause amid utter silence, while every faculty was strained to the utmost. Had the base-born wretch, to whom walls appeared to offer no obstruction, escaped deserved vengeance? Must Justice go unsatisfied, and Wrong triumph, and Truth lay her fair face in the dust?

He pressed within, making his way between the closely-packed muskets and the wall. Neil believed that in the glimpse at the apparition, he had identified it with the person he had seen on that former night, beating the church plate into convenient masses behind the wall. A step further, another, and he discovered, drawn in the smallest possible compass, beyond and beneath the military stores, the figure in its white drapery.

Had he stood forth, musket in hand, in bold defence of his miserable life, those to whom he had forfeited his existence might have felt a comparative respect for the fiend; but there was something so abject and despicable in the posture in which he was found, huddled into a corner like a conquered wolf, Neil threw down his weapon at once, shouting back, as the trusty steel rung upon the stone floor:

"Your reverence can put by rifle and bayonet; less honorable must be the weapons suited to deal with spies and cowards."

But as he was dragged forth into the light, who that had gazed upon that strange, weird, diabolical-looking being would but stand aghast for a breath, questioning with himself whether he could belong to the human kind?

"Art thou ape or imp—speak!" demanded the priest.

No answer, save from the impish throat, as from an open sepulchre, a hollow, unearthly roar.

The priest repeated the question.

The small, deep-set, fiery eyes, looking out of the clay-colored face, fixed upon him; the hideous beast settled as it were upon its haunches, with a motion of its dangling fore-paws indicating a leap upon its prey. In an instant the priest had grappled with him. That instant the monster lay powerless and utterly lifeless at his feet. Father Dunlea stood transfixed with amazement.

"Exorcised, your worship," cried Neil with a smile, and planting his foot firmly on the begrimed robe, so ridiculous in its aspect, in which the nondescript was attired.

"It's child's play this is, indeed," he went on, addressing the shape. "Do ye take us for children, or fools—or cowards like yourself? It's you and meself have met before, very near this spot, and not for nothing. Up quickly, if you wish the chance to do or say anything more in life."

Thus compelled, the man struggled upon his feet.

"O full of all depravity!" came in solemn tones from his lips. "Know ye not, ye thus profanely disturb the repose of generations? I am one belonging to a past age, even that which beheld these ancient stones laid one upon another. Is it not enough that ye profanely intrude here with your poor affairs of to-day, but would ye do me violence, also, and seal your souls for perdition? Remove your sacrilegious hands—let me go free, and I will yield to you the place, and will return hither no more forever."

This was his speech in substance; the language cannot be given—being a strange intermingling of every tongue the priest had known, and especially of the ancient Irish, in its wild expressiveness, that would seem to have originated with the race of Banshees and "good people," of fairy mounts.

"I'd not be disputin' what ye say, so far as I understand," returned Neil, without relaxing his grasp upon the prize, "but this I say of ye—at the least now, ye must have gone shoppin' since the days you mintion, seein' as it's very good linen you wear about ye this night. And, axin' yer pardon, is it woven fabric, or hairy hide, as is to be found underneath the same?"

He rent the white robe from the ancient and honorable, and flung it to the right; the gray mask, and flung it to the left; then from the pocket of a suit very well kept and modern of style, to have been modelled five or six centuries back and

worn during all the period since—snatched forth in triumph a package of papers, neatly folded, fresh and white. A cheer he could not repress, mingled with anathemas from the priest, the strongest his reverence knew how to utter.

So forcible and unlooked-for was Neil's handling of the robber and traitor, the wretch himself had nearly been thrown down, along with his vestments, or tossed aloft with the recovered papers. It was his last resource, and the instant his equilibrium was regained, he seized the priest's weapon from the ground and made a most furious attack, in which Father Dunlea was slightly wounded in the arm, and Neil more than once escaped a mortal thrust.

The musket was fired, its heavy, muffled boom reverberating through the unexplored caverns around. At the same time there came a summons to those within the hall, to open the door. The knocking was loud enough to be heard certainly, while its imperiousness seemed to demand instant attention; yet not until the prisoner had been secured and firmly bound were the two friends fully aware of its import.

"Hear!" ejaculated the priest, glancing over his shoulder—"the villain is in concert with those without. Die, base betrayer of a nation's rights!"

"Hold!" cried Neil, staying his reverence's arm. "If it's himsel' must die thus, Ireland is only half avenged. Sure, prostrate as he's lying cowed and supine, it's not the air of a victor he has. He should live to be dipped in the Shannon."

Still the knocking at the door.

"We have more adversaries at hand than we can bind with cords," said the priest hurriedly, both glancing toward the door. "We will sell our lives dearly, as they shall find—and may God lead on our hosts!"

"It may be better than our fears," returned the other. "Impatient for friends, they yet seem too patient for enemies. Be waiting here, while I go and clear up the mystery."

A word interchanged, and the door flew open, admitting Brodrick and Ratigan.

"In the name of heaven, what is it going on here?" they exclaimed in a breath. "We waited for your coming out—fearing none knew what danger from your staying behind—and it seems an hour we've been knockin', and the din of battle within."

"Come on!" cried Neil, triumphantly. "We are four—

enough to speak the doom of a villain sure. But no, it's this shall be the judgment hall, with our whole noble band for a jury."

"You behold our prize, brothers," observed the priest, "but none of you may be aware of the extent of his crimes. I at least know his history for a short time previous to this night."

"It is he that robbed the church," cried Neil.

"And murdered his wife," added his reverence.

"Ye're a liar!" retorted the prisoner—"instead of the same, it's yerself as stole her away."

"Robber and murderer!" they exclaimed.

"But that is nothing to this," pursued the priest—"for this night Terence McMorny resolved to sell his country and butcher scores of her bravest sons."

"Terence McMorny is not my real name," he cried, "and I am no Irishman, if I am a spy."

"Thank God!" exclaimed four voices in concert. "It was no Fenian, and no Irishman born, who could act so base a part."

## CHAPTER XV.

### DIPPED IN THE SHANNON.

THE river was narrow and deep, seeming in the earlier times of creation to have concentrated its forces at this point, to hurl them against the rocky barrier opposing its course. Successful, it had made for itself a way; and the two sides of the mountain boulder—an arch, wanting its keystone—remained as monuments of victorious effort.

Dark as the stream was the night, and its hours gliding like the swift waters. A few evergreen trees, like monks with cowed heads, were scattered along the banks; from some one of whose tops, a shrilly-crying night-bird seemed to herald the approaching awful event.

With steady tramp a train of horses neared the destined spot. No word was spoken as the dark riders drew rein upon the precipitous brink. From the back of one of the beasts was lifted a burden enclosed in a sack long and narrow. It

was borne between two, to the top of the overhanging rock, and held for a moment suspended over the black sweep of waters.

A heavy plash; the night-bird ceased; empty handed, those who had borne forward the writhing sack retired, and mounting their horses, rode from the place speechless as they had come. It was over.

Daybreak came over the hills, and sunbeams kissed the river; the river smiled back, and told no tale.

Another night fell, and the Fenians' secret hall had never been so densely crowded. Every face seemed ablaze with triumph, and none more than Neil O'Connor's. The last twenty-four hours were pregnant with events pertaining to the cause of liberty. That day had witnessed the sailing of a determined band—gone to infuse the principles of Fenianism into the Irish-American heart. With that occurrence, Neil had shaken the parting hand with Roger Dunlea and the three most intimate friends of boyhood—Brodrick, Ratigan and Flannerty.

He was left behind, yet he could not feel that the circle was broken; it was only widening and enlarging from shore to shore. But for some doubt and uncertainty regarding his father and Kathie, Neil would have been of those who with faces westward, were rocked on the deep to-night. "Were there but one English tyrant less," he had said to Kathie's betrothed, "I would be of your number." To which the other replied with glistening eyes—"It is to you only I could give my Kathie in trust. Save her from all harm, and there's a day in the future—by the blessing of God—shall give my sister to you, and yours to me." And Neil had rejoined—"Ay, fear nothing, since I will wear Rose and Kathie next me heart, that is the shrine of me country."

So full to overflowing was the place of meeting on that evening, that it was necessary to omit the customary drill, much to the general regret—every one feeling that on their proficiency in the arts of war, hinged the glory of their cause. It was voted to divide once again, and the needed locality designated for the meeting.

"I'm wishing half of you were in America," said Neil, with a smile.

"Please God, we soon will be," responded a sturdy voice, "for nowhere so safely and well, we may be sure, can we

model our own liberty, as on that fair soil of freedom. It is to England we are going, but we must take America in our course."

Cheers were proposed, and right heartily given, for the band of patriots who had just departed, on their secret, momentous mission. Just as the last sounds died away, the assembly was thrilled by a strange noise at the door, as of a person filing at the lock. The door was of oak, strongly plated with iron; its lock, for strength and ponderosity, might have been the same used on the Bastille, come now to a better, nobler service.

"We are betrayed!" was the startled exclamation that flew from lip to lip, while instantly every face changed its expression from gladness to severity, and from exultation to fierceness.

The majority of those present fixed their eyes on their leaders; a few nearest the armory, without waiting for orders, hastened to grip the weapons of defence. Breathless was the suspense, bloody the portent of that moment.

"Well is it we all are still here present and undivided," said one, wheeling to face the entrance, "and it will go hard with such as try to force a pass into this room to-night, not being friends."

"Come on, ye minions of a despotic government," cried another, unable to repress his determined rage. "A nightly visit to the Shannon would by no means be amiss, and would to just heaven, I might see its waters *dammed* with the carcasses of Ireland's enemies. The seed is sown—has sprung up—and not even England's proud might can root it from the soil. This it is makes us fearless this hour, and ready for any fate."

At this crisis a voice that had power with that mass of men was heard, speaking in clear low tones, Neil moving calmly amid the solid ranks:

"We'll not be long in discovering the cause of alarm, brothers—but trust in me, it is not serious—and trust yourselves, that you can meet any emergency."

By the time he approached the door the excitement had passed, and not a sound could be heard within the hall; but all watched anxiously, listened intently—then broke into cheers at the familiar knock of Dark Margaret.

It was not, however, the little, dark-robed figure of the Sister of Charity which first made its appearance at the un-

closing of the barred portal. It was merely an animal—a dog—formidable enough in appearance, it is true, with his deep, St. Bernard jaws and powerful frame.

“Rookh! Troth, is it yerself now!” and Neil with actually a tear on his cheek, threw his arms around the neck of his favorite, amid the laughter and exclamations of his friends and the half devouring caresses of the dog.

Then he stooped and gathered up something the brute had laid at his feet, and rising unfurled a handkerchief aloft. There was a rent at one side, and the bright folds were dimmed and draggled, but still it was the very property he had set the creature to guard at home.

“It’s faithful enough for a Fenian ye are,” said the master, proudly, “and a Fenian ye shall be made this night, as sure as iver there’s a spare oath for ye to be sworn by.

“And upon my soul,” he continued, brushing his sleeves of some drops of water, “it’s the same may have been in yer own mind, that ye’ve been preparin’ yerself with some kind of baptism. “Inside yer shaggy coat is an ocean of wet, to be sure.”

How Dark Margaret had recognized the animal of which she had never before heard, and had thus gained him admission to the presence of his master, was a mystery soon explained. The latter had given her his own purse in which to make collections for the cause of liberty. This purse the dog, though at once having recognized Sister Margaret for a friend and not an enemy, and though he could only be gentle to one gentle like her—had peremptorily claimed; and the quick instinct of the blind had effected the rest.

Dark Margaret glided along the subterranean passage, to her post of watchfulness again; but up to the close of the session, Rookh remained with the Brotherhood, in full fellowship—honored for a Fenian who would never, by any word, betray the interests of the Order.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## WHEN LEAST EXPECTED.

DEAD men tell no tales, so there was no longer any fear of Terence McMorny; but lest he might have had accomplices, who understood the wizard ways of ingress and egress to and from their peculiar realm, the Fenians who still met in the original hall, had caused the most rigid examination of the walls to be made, by which the secret door was at last discovered.

An exploration of the space beyond resulted in nothing more than the finding of ancient passages which appeared to lead in different directions, but all completely blockaded by fallen masses of rocks and earth. The strictest investigation, however, ferreted out a narrow pass, terminating in the cellar of the house McMorny had occupied; and with this revelation of the secret, and the most decided measures to prevent a recurrence of spying intrusion, the subject was dismissed.

Time passed and the nation's cause continued to prosper abundantly, both at home and abroad. Letters full of good cheer were received by Neil from his friends in America, making his heart bound with triumph, nerving him to press forward to the ultimate and crowning victory to be achieved.

It was on an evening of a regular meeting of the Brotherhood, and most, if not all, the members were already assembled. In a small vestibule where pitchy darkness reigned, the slight female figure still delayed. All was so silent she deemed her duties for the evening ended, and only paused to whisper an Ave before retiring. Then lightly another footstep approached—stopped before her—and a voice whispered:

"Sainted Sister Margaret, seal me also."

She put forth her hand, and instantly withdrew it.

"Why come you here?" she said quickly. "You are no Fenian."

In an instant a hand was upon her throat. Slight was the struggle and soon over; for her feeble strength was as

nothing to that of her adversary; and yet the latter in hoarsely whispered terror, like one ready to be overcome, exclaimed:

"Bird! For the love of heaven, help. Where are you, that you don't come on!"

"'Ere I ham. 'Ow hawful dark! His the haccursed nun done for?—where can we 'ide the body? Ho, 'ow dark!"

"Never mind about the body—we will take good care to be first out—no matter what discoveries are made after that. Our going late would attract attention, and perhaps expose us. Follow me closely, Bird—I know every inch of the way. Courage!—think of the offered reward."

"Ho! I ham hall courage—like an helephant. Hif I can honly hexpose this Hirish hintrigue to hour Hinglish hauthorities, hand 'ave Neil Hoconnor 'anged, 'appy the day."

"Happy the day when I see in my hand the thousand pounds' reward. But I have vengeance to be satisfied, as well as you, Bird—not only on Neil O'Connor, but on that infernal priest, Father Dunlea, and, by the King of Glory! on all this Fenian horde. Faith! nor was it amiss to begin with Dark Margaret. Hush! here we are!"

"Hi think"—breathed the other, stammeringly—"hi'll just wait a 'alf minute—hout 'ere. We hottent to henter huther-wise than one by 'imself."

The door opened, admitting one.

"Hi reckon hi wont hexpose myself, hafter hall," said Morgan Bird to his fears, creeping behind the door. "Hit hisn't an heven thing—the huther being honly a hordinary hindi-vidual, while I ham 'is lordship's gamekeeper. Hi might 'ear through the key'ole, but hi reckon the houtrageous houtlaws 'ave stopped hit hup."

Neil O'Connor was at that moment standing on the platform, holding in his hand the open letters of his friends beyond the seas; and as he read, every sentence was hailed with delight. His own eye flashed, his chest heaved, the tones of his voice were instinct with eloquence.

The letters finished, in response to an unanimous call, he spoke for a full hour, representing the wonderful progress which the cause was making in all quarters, and picturing in glowing words the cheering signs of the times and the certain, complete success. Then followed cheers for Ireland and Freedom, and groans for England and Tyranny. After this

came the usual military drill, and the meeting was dismissed. Neil himself unlocked the door, as was his habit. Never had he been so elated as on that evening, for never had the end seemed so nearly attained. Almost his boyish carelessness and hilarity were upon him, as he reached forth his hand to join in a good-night's grasp with the first that offered. At the same instant, one, disregarding of the parting salutation, shot past through the open doorway, as he did so, turning a glance of mingled hate and triumph on the young leader, who saw that he was masked.

"Holy saints!" ejaculated Neil—"the dead alive! McMorny! Treason!"

He sprang after the flying figure, which eluded his grasp and disappeared amid the darkness, the footsteps of two beating echoes out of the stone floor. A hundred panting spirits burst from the hall, but their leader, against his will, was compelled to hold them back:

"Caution, or all is lost!"

Quickly, noiselessly, every avenue leading from the hall was thronged; but the search was bootless. It was not to be believed for a moment, that any person unfamiliar with the place could readily make his way out of it; and Neil hardly dared risk his credit for saneness, by reasserting the identity of the present bold intruder with Terence McMorny.

He was standing at a fork of the passage, half petrified with amazement and chagrin, when one came running back to him, and having made two or three unsuccessful efforts to speak, exclaimed:

"Dark Margaret is slain!"

Mechanically, as though wonder and indignation had reached their climax already, Neil went with the man and found it even as he had said. The body of the strangled nun lay stark upon the floor, and the murderer had escaped.

It was break of day when Neil O'Connor and the last of his comrades forced themselves to depart; and to say that they did so with heavy, foreboding hearts, tells but half the truth.

## CHAPTER XVII.

## VENGEANCE.

WHEN the Fenian leader at last quitted the place, he had registered a vow to give himself no rest until the new mystery was unravelled. However seemingly absurd and preposterous the idea, he, at least, could not doubt that McMorny had come to an untimely resurrection. It was but a glance of the eye, yet he knew he could not be mistaken. It was not a conclusion reasonably arrived at, but merely a suggestion forced upon his mind, that some innocent had suffered the penalty due to McMorny's crimes, while through some satanic jugglery in which he had shown himself such an adept, the real criminal had escaped his fate. The question of identity was at the river's bank, and not at the Fenians' hall. At least, Terence McMorny's baptism had not made him loyal; and he had evaded punishment but to repeat all his offences the more daringly.

That they were basely betrayed, and scores of Fenian patriots standing on the very crust of a volcano, all were well aware; but the danger did not prevent their attendance in a body at the funeral of Dark Margaret—their friend, tried and true, and the first martyr to the cause. She was buried in the chapel-vault of the convent where all her life had been passed—a life wholly devoted to the labors and sweet charities of religion—and many were the tears shed by the Sisters who had loved her so much, on the blind eyes now opened in paradise. Solemn masses were said; and where dust was committed to dust, stands a sculptured likeness of the departed; but more enduring than marble is her monument in the hearts of the lowly children of want, and of their children's children, and finally of all those, everywhere, who pray for Ireland's deliverance out of the hands of her enemies.

Neil saw that a crisis was at hand, but only the more did each word he uttered and each movement he made, impart inspiration to those who looked up to him for guidance. Their

shield of secrecy was now torn from them, yet still they fought with bared breasts, and all the more desperately. They had lived to sow broadcast the seed of freedom; and if to water the soil with their blood was necessary to its growth and maturity, let proud England strike!

Still, every precaution that remained to them, they conscientiously made use of in behalf of the great cause to which they had pledged themselves and their all. Every ship that sailed for the western world was freighted with bold spirits, who looked back on their native land with a blessing and a promise, biding their time for action.

Neil's time had not come even yet. Never since the starting-point, had he seen greater need of diligence in the race. Though having bent all his energies to the task, the mysterious spy and informer had thus far escaped detection. Ample time had been allotted the villain in which to do his infamous work; and at home or abroad, no man knew what snares were laid for his feet, or at what moment the emissaries of tyranny would have him in their grasp. But justice, however slow, is always sure; and what could not be prevented, might yet be punished. So thought Neil, and relaxed none of his determined zeal in searching for the offender.

And yet, as often as he seriously considered the subject, to look for Terence McMorny among the living appeared little better than an evidence of self-aberration of intellect. But at least, he constantly reiterated to himself—at least, that pair of eyes belonged to McMorny, and to none beside. The face had been hidden under a mask, the figure he had scarcely noticed, but the treacherous glance that had met his at the moment when the false member dashed from the hall with his ill-gotten intelligence, seemed to have been before him ever since. Neil O'Connor, by day and by night, near and far, was searching for a pair of eyes.

Late one evening, he entered a low restaurant kept by an Englishman, in a filthy street; and in order to have the opportunity of looking about unsuspected, called for a chop and pot of ale. Before they were brought, he caught a single tone of a voice from the next stall, which caused him to hold his breath to listen.

"You hought for to divide hequally—so you hought."

So much he heard in a deprecating, though evidently fuddled tone, and no more. The din of the place drowned

every sound in particular. There was a discordant shouting throughout the establishment, for all the different dishes it furnished—and many more; there was cursing of the dishes when brought, and of the waiters who had brought them—a drunken party to be put out; and several more in various stages of finishing up to the same end, as testified by their bacchanalian singing and only half coherent orders for “more w’iskey.”

Finally the waiter came hurrying up with our hero’s portion; placed the delectable viands on the very edge of the table before him, arranged his knife and fork carefully for a left-handed person, smirked a sort of obeisance as he stepped back and drew the greasy curtain, and departed to the service of other customers—hoping, however, for some kind of perquisite here.

The instant he was alone, Neil pushed the plate and mug into the middle of the table, and standing upon the bench peered over the partition into the adjacent stall. He saw that his conjecture was entirely correct, astonishing as it might seem. The man he had never known to venture beyond the limits of Lord Lismore’s demesne sat facing him, bent rather dubiously over a black bottle and a well-scraped bone of beef.

“O troth, I’d no idea! It’s a Bird o’ passage ye are, as well as a Bird o’ prey,” said Neil to himself, with a smile.

Up to this moment he had not discovered that Morgan Bird had a companion at dinner, but presumed him to be merely enjoying a bit of sociability with himself, under these unusual circumstances—and fancying, perhaps, that he was his lordship himself, dividing an inheritance with a greedy relative. It must be remembered that the gamekeeper had not ventured into the hall, and none there present on the eventful evening last described had guessed that the spy was accompanied by any except invisible fiends.

Just then he espied in the dim light of the stall, a hand thrust out from the partition on the opposite side of which he was standing—a very remarkable hand it was, literally piled up with shining yellow sovereigns; to which the individual to whom they appeared to be offered gave no heed, however, or viewed with a kind of dogged contempt.

“So that amount doesn’t meet your mind, eh?” and with the words, the holder of the gold half rose from his seat, leaning across the table, when to Neil’s surprise and unbounded

gratification he heard the voice and saw the person of Terence McMorny.

It was no mistaken identity, and neither wraith nor apparition; but really and truly, Terence McMorny, with all his crimes upon his head, and in his hand the price of blood.

"Now my idee is," continued McMorny with considerable emphasis, "that you are quite too well paid with this, Bird. I'd like to ax, what risk did ever you run in the matter? Nary risk; on the contrary, you acted the part of a coward and a sneak—yes, you did!—deny it, if you can!"

"Hi?" returned the other—"well, hi know hi run a him-mense risk; hand you houghter know. Haint I absent without anybody's leave, hand what if 'is lordship should 'appen to come to Lismore 'all!"

"That's nothing here nor there," rejoined the principal. "It's the fact, you might as well have been at home all the while, looking after the master's game, for any good you've done."

"Hit's a hungrateful world this," remarked Morgan Bird, in profound wisdom, watching the empty bottle, as with his spread palm resting on its top he tipped it right and left demurely. "Hits hingratitude his hawful—hit's 'orrid. 'Ere I ham—you 'ire me—just when I hexpect my money's hearnt, you git hall hinto your hown 'ands, and you hobject to giving me 'alf. Hask yourself what was the agreement."

"The agreement was, that you was to go into the Fenians' hall with me," said McMorny with increased severity—"and did you do it? No, you didn't."

"Something might 'ave 'appened," explained the game-keeper, "hand I could 'elp you more to be houtside. But hany'ow this hisn't the first time I've haided you. There was the haffair hin your hown 'ouse, hand 'ow was I hever paid? Hit's no fault of mine, hif you let hevrything slip through your 'ands in the hend."

Neil was able to hear, as well as see, all that passed. While looking and listening, he found opportunity likewise to think; but his thoughts were none of the most agreeable. Here was the individual he had so zealously sought for—he could almost have clutched his eager fingers in that bristling hair; and yet to secure him and his accomplice in this place was simply an impossibility. Had they been Irishmen, the case might have been different; but a Cockney in the midst of a

Cockney brood, could not be so much as accused with impunity. However unwilling, he must allow them to quit the place, without suspicion, trusting to what might follow.

It was no easy task to bring himself to this conclusion; and had Morgan Bird given one glance up at the face that was bent upon him, with its set teeth, fierce, devouring eyes, and cords standing out knottily on the forehead, he would hardly have sat there with that cool assurance. He had been drinking pretty freely, as well as the other—to judge from appearances, and Neil was not sorry to hear him call for more liquor. His handful of gold had been returned to his own pocket.

Not to disappoint the waiter fatally, our hero laid a shilling beside his untasted lunch, and went out with as much *sang froid* as possible. The counter at which he paid his bill directly fronted the stall in which his two choice acquaintances were sitting; and having been obliged to wait there for several minutes in the crowd, with only a dingy fold of curtain to hide him from them, he was glad to escape to the street.

As he ascended the last step leading from the cellar, so propitious was fortune, he was met by two trusty brothers, bent on the same errand with himself. Neil could only clasp their hands in his own, without uttering a syllable, nor were these less elated than himself at the unlooked-for meeting.

"Come with us," whispered one of them, "for it's a good night's work we mean to make of it."

"Hush!" replied Neil, "whatever it is, don't breathe your business in this crowd."

He led the way across the street to a dusky angle, whence he could watch the door through which he had just emerged.

"It will go hard with us," said the second friend, "but we will have our fine informer before another day. It appears we're close on his track; for not an hour ago, a man was showing gowld in a drinkin' hole nigh-hand, and boastin' of a great reward he had received from Government, for turnin' up a nest of Fenians. We overheard a sailor tellin' the same to his two comrades, the three—villains, to be sure!—layin' all their plans for kapin' an eye on the man with the gowld, to waylay and rob him after all's gone quiet. And the fellow hisself can't be far off, sure."

"Quite right," Neil replied—"they're in yonder cellar—for they are two in company—and there they come this blessed minute!"

The two informers came out and passed down the street. Neither was entirely firm upon his legs; Morgan Bird, especially, found it convenient to take his companion's arm to help his infirmity. That last bottle together had made them better friends, it seemed; and instead of wrangling about the proceeds of their nefarious work, they were speaking in the most amicable manner.

"Rayther 'eroic, that last story o' yourn—if it's true—but I'll be 'anged hif I don't find hit 'ard to swallow," remarked the gamekeeper, with some unmanageableness of the tongue. "Them houtlaws may 'a' drowned ye—that's hall right; but to tell that a dog drawed you hout of the river—aha-ah! Hi hask, 'ow would you be hable to believe a story so hawful 'ard? But by hall the saints, now I think hon't, Neil Hoconnor 'as a dog hexactly wot you tell for. 'E could be savage as a meat-hax, hand so hi've wanted a chance to pizen 'im. I wouldn't wonder an' it's the very hanimal—hanybody couldn't drowned hif 'e was hever so determined, where that dog was haround."

"Well, all I know," drawled his companion, "I was hatin' that dog afore he'd fairly got me out o' the river. It wasn't nat'ral, and if he belonged to that confounded Fenian, why that accounts for the feeling. It's about a sure thing, that the whole gang of Fenians is arrested by this time, and may you and I see them hanged. Well, as many dogs as there bez in the world, I wouldn't wonder, after all, if that dog was Neil O'Connor's dog, as you say."

Rookh's master, as he caught these observations, somewhat vaguely in the highly excited state of his feelings, was of McMorny's opinion. He recollected the coat of his favorite saturated with water, when the latter came to him in the hall, creating so great a panic, and the mystery of Terence McMorny's re-appearance disappeared like a shadow.

Not shadows, but realities, were here—it was with the present those three men had to do. Cautiously they had followed the unsuspecting villains, till the opportunity arrived. It was a dark alley admitting to the rear of a house belonging to a staunch member of the Brotherhood.

"Blood for blood!—Fenianism and Dark Margaret!" were the ejaculations hissed into the guilty ears of the pair with the application of the garotte.

How soon all was over! They came and went—men and

women—over that very spot of pavement, seeing nothing, thinking nothing amiss. And indeed what was amiss? Justice and Neil O'Connor had triumphed again—and this time the triumph was sure!

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### ROOKH.

It was evening. A stagecoach rattled along the country highway, and within the coach four travellers. Two of the number were English, which of course entitles them to be first mentioned. They had entered the public conveyance together, and seemed to be acquaintances, though their conversation had thus far been confined to a question or a remark, here and there. The remaining passengers were a middle-aged woman and a young man, belonging, by their dress, to the respectable class of Irish peasantry.

The latter, evidently, was an object of no little attention to the two Englishmen, though the glances each by turns cast upon him were furtive, and intended to pass unobserved. Nature gives to all Englishmen a certain pompous air—it is the stamp of their nationality; these showed rather more—there was about them something of the air official—a half-hidden badge of authority. One might imagine their pockets to be plethoric with documents of some kind.

The woman appeared to feel an instinctive dread of them, such as the Irish peasantry do of bailiffs and squires, and had packed herself into the corner of the carriage as closely as her dimensions would allow, and drawn her hood well over her face. The young man sharing the front seat with her, facing her majesty's favorites, may or may not have been aware of the attention he was honored with—at all events, he was not in the least embarrassed, but sat erect, or lounged carelessly, as suited his mood, and once was heard humming *Molly Muldoon*—a great irreverence, to be sure, when the air ought to have been—*God save the Queen!*

While the coach stopped for a few moments, one of the gentlemen got out and standing close by the horses' heads while the driver was watering the animals, made with unaccountable privacy the very ordinary inquiry—how far it was to the next town.

Neil—for the peasant traveller was he—overheard the question distinctly. He could have answered it as well as the driver, and would have been happy to oblige, and so to have saved the stout Englishman the trouble of alighting; but the latter re-entered as hastily as possible, breathed in his companion's ear—"a matter of three miles, he says"—and both appeared gratified when they had started on their way, and were lessening that distance at a very fair rate of speed.

"Haven't we come a mile from the watering-place?" inquired one of the Englishmen by-and-by, happening to turn his eyes on Neil as he spoke.

"It's what I should say was that intirely," the latter promptly replied—quickly adding—"Arrah, I beg yer honor's pardon—I thought it was mysil' as was axed."

The two English gentlemen gave him a long, searching look—lasting, in fact, till the second milestone was fully past. Next they exchanged glances with each other, and lastly, each sat on the edge of the seat and barred a coach-door with his outstretched legs.

"Holy Mither!" groaned the woman in the corner impatiently, "will we iver be gittin' there?"

The vigorous youth did not look tired at all, and appeared to feel that they were getting forward rapidly enough for any purposes that concerned himself. He seemed, as he had seemed all along, one of those comfortable people who take the world and weather just as they find them. The Englishmen, on the contrary, seemed getting excessively nervous; they eyed Neil O'Connor openly now, while the official air about them grew mighty, and looked out of every feature of their rubicund faces.

A sudden sharp yell, a prolonged baying behind the coach, and the horses started off at a mad gallop. It was just at the top of a long hill, overlooking the town. The driver exerted himself to the utmost to check the beasts; there was the snapping of a rein, and the man was dashed from his seat into the deep mud of the ditch—a bed softer than any down. The Englishmen cursed the driver and sprang up in dismay; the female traveller gave a shriek and jumped through the door; and now another sharp cry, and into the coach leaped a tremendous brute with glaring eyeballs and distended jaws.

Fortunately for England's worthies, the creature made his first onslaught upon the young Irishman, which gave them

time to escape with their lives. One leaped out right, one left—they never remembered how; but they received between them, in the shape of a sprained ankle and a broken arm, the only serious injuries to horses, coach or passengers.

The animals gradually slackened their headlong speed, and drew up of their own accord before the door of the little inn; where Neil alighting, reported the accident and sent off assistance. The solitary original passenger waited not, however, to learn the results; but with that terrible brute still cleaving to him, walked quickly on, leaped a stile into a wide moor; crossing which, he soon saw the light of a cabin window, where he knew he would find a welcome—not one ending in words.

“It’s a reckless brute ye are, anyhow, Rookh,” observed the dog’s master with a smile, sitting comfortably before the fire, over which a tidy woman was busily preparing him supper. “Since the night ye tuk the oath for a Fenian, ye obey not the laws at all. Wasn’t it mesil’ yer own masther, as sint ye home by a neebor, and how comes ye here the night, wid all yer ould blusther and mischief-makin’ about ye, and the loop of rope still on yer neck!”

The reckless brute had been employed in swallowing successively a family of five or six small children, beginning with their arms—then as he thought better of it in each instance, gulping them up again—the children vieing with one another in being swallowed the greatest number of times. At this speech from the master he worshiped, Rookh left his sport and turned toward him with that wistful look which makes one wish a favorite animal could speak his thoughts.

“Arrah, could ye be tellin’ us how is Kathie now?”

The dog with a low whine reared upon his master’s knee, the master caressing him, with fingers buried in the shaggy hair of the creature’s neck.

“Yerself was too faithful once—only once—too faithful altogither. But Terence McMorny’s safe now, and I forgive ye—I do, from me heart. Troth—” in a changed tone—“is it that ye carry the mail, Rookh?—and was it the post-horn ye was blowin’ behind the coach maybe?”

Attached to the cord around the creature’s neck, he had found a bit of folded paper. Wondering, he tore it off, and turning to the firelight, opened and read:

“NEIL, DEAREST BROTHER:—Wherever this may find ye—does it find ye at all—come to us! KATHIE.”

That was all, but in those few words was a world of meaning to the brother of Kathie O'Connor.

"I'll not be stayin' for supper, thank ye kindly," he said rising. "It's a letter from me sister the baste has brought to me hand, and I'll not be atin' nor slapin' till I know the trouble that's at home, sure."

His friends prevailed upon him, however, to partake of some hasty refreshment; when with the noble animal by his side, he bade good-by and departed.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

### A FINAL SETTLEMENT.

THE first faint streaks of dawn appeared in the east, as Neil entered the little village where he was born, and passed on by the cottages of his neighbors to that of his father. All was silent—so silent, he wished he might hear if it were but the crowing of a cock, or the lowing of a cow, to break the oppressive stillness and show him that he was among the living.

Rookh, the whole distance, had walked just under his master's right hand, as if held in leash; now, instead of any demonstration of joy at nearing home, the animal strided on only the more demurely, solemnly; and his manner was calculated to increase his master's misgivings.

"Well, at least, they're aisy in bed the hour," said Neil to himself, standing a moment before the home-door.

He pulled the latch-string and noiselessly crossed the familiar threshold.

The light of morning was just sufficient to reveal the room totally stripped of everything like furniture, and having the chilly, gloomy aspect of a barn, rather than the cheerfulness of a human dwelling. The heart of the son and brother sank within him; he could not forbear moaning aloud. Rookh echoed the plaintive cry, pulling at his master's frock, in the attempt to draw him from the house, as though to wander abroad still were better than to remain in this desolate spot.

Neil turned toward the corner where had stood his father's bed, and on which his mother had died—how vacant! He look for the settle under the little window—only the blank wall met his painful gaze. He went up to the hearth—the handful of cold, gray ashes scattered there was beaten down

by the last rain. Once more he turned; he opened the door into Kathie's bedroom—all was empty likewise. Then, treading softly, as we tread in the chamber of death, he suffered the dog to lead him from the dwelling.

"Is this his lordship's work, by Saint Peter, it shall go hard with him!"

Neil said this rather to strengthen himself, than with any definite idea that the remark was just and appropriate. He recalled the interview with the agent, effected with so much difficulty—and how he had vainly pressed him to receive payment of his father's debt; and being positively refused, had left explicit orders to be addressed in Dublin, in case of money being wanted. No communication was ever received; and, of course, no demand, then, had been made in any quarter.

He had a desire to visit the graveyard—a vague sense that there and there alone could the mystery be solved. He thought of Rose, but it seemed to him that she too was lost—and everything was lost! He thought of Glyn; and asked himself reproachfully, how would he answer to that friend, should they ever meet, for the broken vow given him at parting?

Stupefied with grief and amazement, he was led forward blindly; till coming to himself just as the earliest sunbeams tinged the hilltop, he saw the smoke curling upward from Mrs. Brodrick's cottage, near at hand. In a moment Kathie and Rose burst from the door, and were encircled in his arms.

"It's a coward I am—the greatest coward that lives!" he exclaimed, with tears coursing down his cheeks, as he kissed his sister and affianced. "But what is it this manes? I went to the house and found it deserted intirely. Surely his lordship—"

"Yes," returned Rose, flashing indignation from her deep blue eyes, while Kathie could speak never a word, "it's all of his lordship's doin', and he struck your poor father a blow as has laid him on his bed iver since—and that's four days. Come in and see him—and see my mither. And tell us, was the letther afther reachin' you?—and wasn't it a clever thought of Kathie's? And," she whispered, "for Kathie's sake, ye might be sayin' when did ye hear last from Glyn—the dear boy!"

Little additional explanation is necessary. Lord Lismore had returned from London, and attempted to press his suit with Kathie, fully resolved to brook no delay. Bryson

O'Connor, as gently as possible, returned for answer, that his daughter still strenuously opposed such a union, and in fact had made a very different choice for herself. When his lordship, choking with wrath, interrupted with the old threat of turning them out, the other replied that his son in Dublin would cancel the demand as soon as he could be written to on the subject—a reply which only made his lordship furious.

He repeatedly sought an interview with Kathie herself, but always without success, for the lass would fly from him, as the deer from the wolf. Meeting with her father after one of these disappointments, and finding the man was neither to be bribed nor frightened, he became so enraged that he struck him a heavy blow over the shoulder with his cane. The same day the tenant was ejected, and compelled to seek a shelter for himself and daughter at a neighbor's.

"Wait a bit," said Neil, white with anger, when he had heard the story from the lips of his father—"it's mesilf will settle with his lordship."

His tone sounded significant to Kathie, who glanced at her friend with a proud smile, as much as to say—"Now it's my brother is here, he'll see things set right, or it shall go hard with him."

Neil requested the family to keep his presence a secret for one day. An hour or two later, having disguised himself as much as possible, he went out. They looked for his return until afternoon, and then were visited by a very different person. The poor tenant was seized for debt, and taken from his sick bed to be dragged to prison. An hour later, Neil re-appeared.

"Father hissel' said niver a word," said Kathie with flushed cheeks and streaming eyes, "but I was so wildly frightened, I could but tell them my brother was by and ready to pay the debt. They didn't believe the same at all, and took no notice. They're gone with him, and father so patient-like, as though it was what he had expected to be arrested sooner. But it would have broke my heart, sure, didn't I know you would bring him back directly."

"It's what I'll be doin' indeed," replied her brother emphatically, "so now don't ye cry at all."

Doubtless it was some lingering expectation on the part of his lordship, that O'Connor would repent, which had caused him to delay the arrest so long. The tidings had been circulated in the neighborhood for nearly a week, that Neil O'Con-

nor, and all the Fenians, had been arrested;—Mrs. Brodrick even had heard of it, and only with difficulty had managed to keep the report from her daughter and Kathie. Lord Lisimore had relied on the truth of this, in urging his demands with Neil's father.

The son, upon hearing what had happened, hurried away again. At dusk Bryson O'Connor was quietly returned to his friends,—and all he himself knew of the matter was, that a party of strange looking fellows had suddenly surrounded the vehicle, and snatched him from his custodian, who was too much awed to attempt any opposition.

It was eleven o'clock the same evening, that a young stranger, of gentlemanly appearance, called at the Hall and desired to see his lordship. The servant conducted him to the library, where the master was sitting in dressing-gown and slippers—very comfortable in appearance, till you looked him in the face, whose expression was savage as a watch-dog's that is fed on raw meat. The wattles were growing longer and getting bluer.

At the entrance of his late visitor into the room, the nobleman raised his head with a kind of short, low growl, and waited his business.

"I am here," said the stranger promptly, "to thank your lordship for the gift to my father."

His lordship started slightly at the sound of that voice, but settled back in his chair again, remarking slowly:

"I don't know you, nor can I at this moment recall what it is you allude to."

"Ah then!" The young man tore off a pair of false whiskers. "You know me now?"

"Y-e-s," stammered the nobleman, rising quickly and retreating a pace or two. He tried to articulate—"What brings you here?" but the question stuck in his throat—it was too well answered already.

"You gave my father, Bryson O'Connor, a blow—I am obliged to you, because it affords me the right to give you the same in return. It's not for one of my class to be swinging a cane, but not to be too modest, I've a very good fist o' my own."

His lordship made for the door, shouting for help.

"Jist be comin' this way, and there's plenty of witnesses, who'll see fair play intirely."

To his utter consternation, his lordship felt himself seized by the collar and hauled through the French window into open air. Instantly, a ring was formed, and his lordship invited to "be a man now!"—and promised an Irish lass for a wife if he would "go in and win."

Thus inspired, and finding that his outcries were powerless to bring assistance—the servants, most of whom had been in bed, merely showing themselves at the windows and venturing no second look—his lordship did as he was bidden, and it must be confessed, proved himself not so bad a pugilist. From the first, however, the lots were all against him—a very disheartening circumstance, and probably having the effect to make him give in the sooner. Within ten minutes he lay down on the ground completely "blowed," amid the direst groans and wildest acclamations of the array of spectators.

"Will yer honor be callin' the debt settled?—and will yer honor's honor be gettin' a wife in England and lavin' alone our Irish lasses?"

Neil put the interrogatories while skipping beside his prostrate foe, with smiting of fists, fresh for another bout. The other managed to articulate satisfactory answers to all when he was permitted to rise, and the first scene ended.

The second scene was ushered in by screams from the servants, some of whom, probably, in the excitement and rushing to and fro, had occasioned the catastrophe they now perceived. The Hall was on fire.

"Save my property!" gasped his lordship, unable from sheer terror to do more than cast an imploring glance around upon the throng, not one of whom could be recognized for disguises.

"Save your property?" they repeated in a chorus, "when it's jist yersil' as turns a poor man out of house and home! By Saint Patrick, it'll not be done, anyhow."

A delegation immediately took possession of the well, but no contest ensued in endeavoring to obtain the means of extinguishing the flames. The servants thought of nothing beyond escaping with their lives, and no soul offered a drop of water to cool those rapacious tongues of fire. If groans were wet blankets, his lordship's would have smothered the conflagration speedily; but on the other hand it seemed as if the devouring element was actually cheered on by the shouts of the many who highly approved its doings.

So rapid had been the progress of the flames, that at the end of barely a few minutes, no power on earth could have saved the buildings from a general destruction. As the heat increased and became too intense to be borne, all fell back to the garden, and thence continued to watch the gorgeous pageant. The country for miles around was brilliantly illuminated; yet more than an hour passed, before any soul appeared to the rescue—for the good reason that most of the country-folks were there already. It must have shocked his lordship indeed, to listen to the observations which were addressed him by that heartless crowd—to be asked, “wasn’t it an illegant bonfire inthirely, to be got up in prospect of his lordship’s wedding!”

At length, after the roof of the Hall had plunged into the cellar, and all the glass of the windows had been made into crystal balls, three or four horsemen were seen galloping up the hill. That was the signal for the crowd to retire, which they did in good order, considering it no bad night’s work which had been accomplished.

## CHAPTER XX.

### NEIL’S LATEST TRIUMPH.

THERE was no longer in all Ireland a safe foot of land for the Fenian leader to tread upon. His friends all became aware of the fact which was previously well known to himself, when on the second day after he reached home, every dwelling in the neighborhood underwent a search for him. The event being one he had foreseen, Neil was fully prepared accordingly, and no prize was obtained.

In a day or two after this, when all had become quiet, he suddenly walked in at Mrs. Brodrick’s door again. Kathie and Rose who were half dead from fear lest he should have been taken, rushed to embrace him, beseeching even while clinging to him wildly, that he would fly for safety, *somewhere*. Neil cheerfully replied that his plans were all laid, and if successful, by the blessing of God, they all would shortly be beyond the power of tyrants and oppressors.

“Sit down now,” he said, “there’s three of us, and father and Mrs. Brodrick—that’s our mother. Listen to me, girls, for sure it’s something ye’ve got to do yerselves. But first,

I've some good old English gowld, to be leavin' in yer care, and ye'll find it handy for any expenses sure."

He took a belt from his person, and from it counted out a thousand pounds sterling. He smiled while thus engaged, to observe the dumb amazement of every one present, and when Kathie looked inquiringly up in his face, answered her with:

"Arrah, ye see, it's the reward of Government for Neil O'Connor, that's meself. As I've got this young reprobate, all in me own power, who is it else should be claimin' the reward?—and here it is."

While the sovereigns were being disposed of, Rookh sprang up from his master's feet, with eyes keenly fixed on the door, and ears listening to some sound no other could detect.

"O Holy Mary!" exclaimed Rose, below her breath, "I fear they've tracked you in, Neil."

Her alarm seemed well founded, and every face but Neil's paled with terror, as light footsteps were heard without. Kathie threw herself on her knees before her brother, with her arms around the dog's neck, as if praying the dumb creature to be brave once more for the preservation of his master—but Rookh needed no such entreaty.

"Have ye no weapon, my boy?" asked his father.

Neil had risen from his chair, but he answered nothing.

"The cellar!" whispered Mrs. Brodrick, seizing him by the arm—"I'll be hidin' ye there—quick now!"

There was a tap on the window sill.

Instantly Kathie bounded to her feet, threw up her arms, and uttered a single syllable before she sank down half fainting:

"Glyn!"

The same instant the door was opened and two men entered whom under other circumstances it would have been difficult to identify as Glyn Brodrick and their former spiritual adviser, Father Dunlea. Love penetrates disguises, and plenty of love was here. The wearers of the disguises which had served them so well in crossing the country, had feared to cause an alarm by entering the cottage without any premonition to its inmates.

"By yer looks, it's not intirely ignorant ye are of the risk ye run in comin' home at this present time."

Neil made the observation to his friends in something of reproof; they were the first coherent words spoken, amid a multitude of exclamations of every kind.

"O why *did* you come, then?" echoed Kathie, mingling terror with rejoicing.

"To transplant my Bloom of Killarney to American soil," her lover replied.

"It's no idle call we're making," added his reverence, "as both Ireland and England shall know. And it poorly becomes one who has been in the hottest of the strife throughout, like yourself, to speak to others of danger. But surely your hour is come, and all here may depart together. We, as men and patriots, are only receding a pace in order to get room to strike the blow for freedom."

"True! True!" cried all.

There were throbbing hearts and busy hands for a little while; but long ere daylight appeared the cottage was deserted of all its inmates.

The next scene was in a church, and likewise by night. The priest was at the altar. The wedding guests were few.

"It is what nobody expected, dear Glyn," Kathie whispered, "my father and your mother would be married to one another before ourselves."

"Not long before, sure," returned Glyn, pressing her hand.

And so it was—Glyn and Kathie were married, being the third couple then and there, for Neil and Rose had preceded them into the blissful realm of wedlock. Rookh was present as a witness, seeming, however, to be but little interested in the ceremonies, and volunteering to stand guard the while at the church door. Wherever they went, no one of that company would ever consent to leave the faithful brute behind.

"But for my sacred calling," said Father Dunlea, only half in jest, as he bent to kiss the two young brides, "it would have gone hard with me, but I'd have robbed one or the other of these bridegrooms of his bride. *Pax Vobiscum.*"

Through the two returned emigrants, everything had been perfectly and successfully arranged for the voyage; which began well, and ended even better. A few months pass, and we find our friends pleasantly established in American homes of their own.

The history of Fenianism is not ended. It but reached one brave climax, when in October 1865, at Philadelphia, the principles of the Order were fearlessly proclaimed to a waiting world. That day was Neil O'Connor's triumph; but he and his many thousand brothers look for a greater to come.